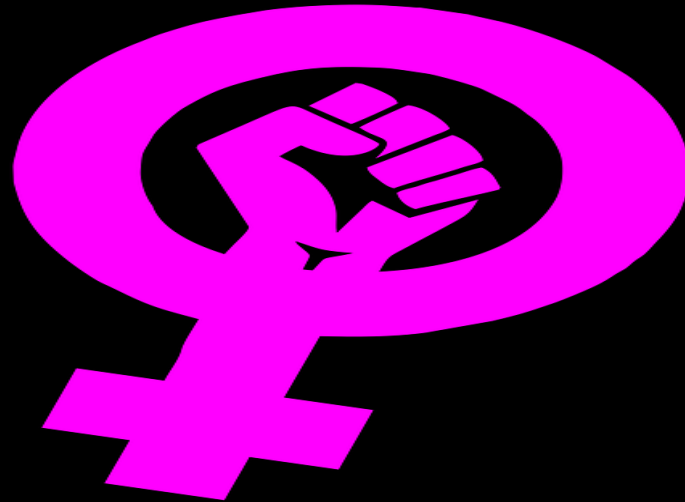


Just do it! Yes? No? Maybe?
Eish!

Is feminism biblical? A theological journey



Attempting to define feminism

- “the advocacy of *womxn*'s rights on the ground of the equality of the sexes”
- Feminism is not restricted to only *womxn*.
- There are also men feminists or at least ally to feminism

Waves of feminism

1st Wave – 19th – early 20th C: “the promotion of equal contract, marriage, parenting, and property rights for women” and suffrage (the right to vote)

2nd Wave – mid 20th C: *Womxn*’s role in the home and civil society in recognizing the oppressive nature of political powers

3rd Wave – late 20th C– early 21st C: What and who defines “femininity”?
Also saw the rise of “different forms” of feminism

4th Wave – approx. 2012: Justice for *womxn* – the silence breakers

Forms (some) of feminism

1. Liberal feminism focuses on women's ability to maintain their equality through their own actions and choices.

- Emphasis is on making the legal and political rights of women equal to men.
- *Womxn*, by nature, are not less intellectually and physically capable than men
- They strive for sexual equality via political and legal reform

Forms (some) of feminism

2. Marxist feminism is focused on investigating and explaining the ways in which women are oppressed through systems of capitalism and private property

- According to Marxist feminists, *womxn's liberation* can only be achieved through a radical restructuring of the current capitalist economy

Forms (some) of feminism

3. Radical feminism calls for a radical reordering of society by eliminating all forms of male supremacy in the social and economic spheres

- Radical feminists view society as fundamentally patriarchal and oppressive to *womxn*
- Challenges existing social norms and institutions based on patriarchy by opposing the sexual objectification, rape, and violence of women, as well as gender roles

The Bottom Line

- Feminism would argue, generally, that it is not about your gender or sexual orientation that should grant you power and privilege.
- Feminism, in essence, is a response to power and the abuse of power against any form of sexual and gender grounds but especially toward *womxn*.

Approaches to Feminism (in the church)

1. Complementarianism:

- Women are equal in status and worth to men
- The roles and responsibilities are different but *complementary* in marriage, family life, religious leadership, and civil society
- The concept of “headship” is relevant

Approaches to Feminism (in the church)

2. Egalitarianism (biblical equality):

- Women are equal to men in authority and responsibility
- Argues for mutual submission between the genders

Egalitarians Beliefs

- Men and women can both hold church leadership positions.
- Spouses are equally responsible for the family.
- Marriage is a partnership of two equals submitting to one another.
- Roles should be ability-based and not gender-based.

Complementarian Beliefs

- Belief that only men should hold church leadership positions. Usually, women may hold positions that do not place them in authority over men.
- A patriarchal view of the family, with the father as the head.
- The view that a man should love his wife as Christ loved the church, and a woman should submit to her husband as the church submits to Christ.

What do we think the Bible says?

We have to acknowledge:

- Different faith traditions
- Different methods of interpretation
- The biblical world (context)
- The revelation of God: Special, general and progressive
- The total witness of Scripture

Specific Texts for Complementarianism

- 1 Cor. 14:34-35
- 1 Tim. 2:8-15
- Eph. 5:21-33
- Col. 3:18-19
- Titus 2:3-5
- 1 Pt. 3:1-7

Specific Texts for Egalitarianism

- Acts 2
- Gal. 3:28
- 1 Cor. 3:7-15
- 1 Cor. 11:5
- 1 Tim. 2

A Broad Overview of The Egalitarian Position

1. Created Equality

- God created male and female as equal in all respects - ontological and functional equality (Gen. 1:26-27)

2. Fallen Disorder and Hierarchy

- Sin introduced an illegitimate hierarchy in the relationship between woman and man (Gen. 3:16)

3. Restored Equality through Redemption in Christ

- Full male/female equality is restored, dignity is given back to women, and servant attitudes are called for in men and women alike (Gal. 3:28)

Primary Rationale Supporting the Egalitarian Position

Evidence that God's design was for male/female equality

- Gen. 1:26-27 – man and woman share the same human nature, both are made in God's image, and both are given God's commission to rule the earth.
- Gen. 2:18 – woman as “helper” is best understood as one who comes to complement - man and woman need each other and so are equal partners in this relationship, not that the woman is in a subordinate relationship to the man.
- Gen. 2:22-24 – they are one flesh, or the same flesh, indicating full equality of person.
- Gal. 3:28 – a return to what God intended in creation, an intent that was distorted by the fall and sin but now made real again in Christ.
- 1 Cor. 12:7-11 – Women and men alike are recipients of all of God's gifts. Since God's spiritual gifting is gender-neutral, and since God expects His gifts to be used in the church, it follows that men and women alike are equal in their exercise of gifts in the church.

Biblical Examples of Female Equality with Males

1. Female leadership in patriarchal Israel: Miriam (Ex.15), Huldah (2 Kings 22) and Deborah (Judges 4-5) who were prophetesses; and Deborah who was also a judge in Israel. Other examples are Esther, Ruth and Naomi.

2. Prov. 31:10-31 – provides a commendation to this ideal woman who fears the Lord and who expresses her faithful service to the Lord through business dealings outside of the home as much as her provision inside the home.

3. Women in the OT:

- Deborah – An influential judge (Judges 4)
- Rahab – An unlikely ancestor of Jesus (Jos. 2, 6:22-25)
- Ruth – Great grandmother of King David (Ruth)
- Hannah – Mother of Samuel (1 Sam. 1 & 2)
- Esther – Young queen that saved Israel (Esther)

Biblical Examples of Female Equality with Males

4. Women in the NT

- Anna the prophetess (Lk. 2:36-38)
- Mary the mother of Jesus (Lk. 1:26-38; Jn. 19:25-27)
- Rhoda the servant girl (Acts 12:13-15)

5. Leaders of house churches:

- Chloe (1 Cor. 1:11)
- Nympha (Col. 4:15)
- Apphia (Philemon 2)
- Lydia (Acts 16:11-14, 40)

Biblical Examples of Female Equality with Males

6. Husband and wife team:

- Priscilla & Aquila (Acts 18:26; Rom. 16:3) – Priscilla mentioned first

7. Co-workers in Christ:

- Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis (Rom. 16:6, 12)
- Euodia & Syntyche (Phil. 4:2-3)
- Phoebe a deacon in the church (Rom. 16:1-2)
- Andronicus and Junia(s) as “outstanding among the apostles” (Rom. 16:7)

Specific Examples of Jesus' interaction with Females

There are numerous examples of significant roles women played in Jesus' ministry, roles which, although unacceptable to the culture of the day, nevertheless display Jesus' full endorsement of women and their desire to minister

Jesus interacts, speaks, heals, and commissions women with respect, meaning, and worth, unlike the times he lived in

- Samaritan woman (Jn. 4:1-42)
- Significance to Mary, mother of Jesus (Jn. 2:4)
- First women to sight the resurrection (Lk. 24)
- The woman with a bad reputation (Lk. 7:36-50; 19:25-27; Jn. 8:10-11)
- Healing women (Lk. 8:48; Mk. 5:34; Lk. 11:27-28; 13:12)

A Broad Overview of the Complementarian Position

1. Created Equality of Essence and Distinction of Role

- Male and female were created by God as equal in dignity, value, essence and human nature, but also distinct in role whereby the male was given the responsibility of loving authority over the female, and the female was to offer willing, glad-hearted and submissive assistance to the man (Gen. 1:26-27; Gen. 2; 1 Cor. 11 & 1 Tim. 2)

2. Fallen Disruption of God's Created Design

- Sin introduced a disruption in the proper role-relations between man and woman, (Gen. 3:15-16) informs us the woman would have a desire to usurp the authority given to man in creation and abusive relationships by the male.

3. Restored Role Differentiation through Redemption in Christ

- Male leadership and authority (headship) and female submission is affirmed in Christ in the home and in the church (Eph. 5:22-33 & 1 Tim. 2:8-15).

Primary Rationale Supporting the Complementarian Position

Evidence that God's design was male/female equality of essence

1. Gen. 1:26-27 – shows that man and woman share the same human nature, both are made in God's image, and both are given God's commission to rule the earth. How they are, together, to rule the earth on God's behalf, is not here explained. Thus, the thrust is that male and female are equal in essence.
2. Gal. 3:28 – Gender is absolutely irrelevant regarding who may or may not be saved. Men and women are equal in essence because their salvation comes to humans with no consideration given to gender.
3. 1 Cor. 12:7-11 – God distributes His gifts to His people as He so wills. Women and men alike are recipients of all of God's gifts (1 Cor. 11:5 - women having the gift of prophecy) and are equal in essence.
4. 1 Pet. 3:7b – Saved women (wives, in this text) are to be treated with honor, precisely because they, along with saved men, are fellow-heirs of the grace of life in Christ.

Evidence that God's design was for male/female role differentiation

1. Gen. 2 – Support for male-headship (i.e., male God-given authority over female). 1) The order of creation indicates male priority (1 Cor. 11:8; 1 Tim. 2:13). 2) God instructed Adam not to eat fruit of the forbidden tree (2:16-17) but Adam failed to guard his wife as he should have). 3) Eve was created to be Adam's helper (1 Cor. 11:9-10). 4) Adam's naming of Eve indicates, in an OT cultural context, Adam's right of authority over the one whom he named.

2. Gen. 3:1-7 – Eve was tempted and sinned first. Yet, God approaches Adam, not Eve, as the one ultimately responsible for the sin. Likewise, Paul clearly teaches that the line of sin in the human race begins with Adam (Rom. 5:12ff; 1 Cor. 15:22). But he does this in full recognition of the fact that Eve sinned first (1 Tim. 2:14).

3. Gen. 3:16 – Sin produced a disruption in God's order of male headship and female submission, in which a) the woman would usurp the man's rightful place of authority over her, and b) the man would be inclined to misuse his rights of rulership, either by sinful abdication of his God-given authority, acquiescing to the woman's desire to rule over him, or by abusing the rights of the woman.

Evidence that God's design was for male/female role differentiation

4. 1 Cor. 11:1-16 –The woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head (11:10), because she is the glory of man (11:7), because she originated from man (11:8), and because she was created for the man's sake (11:9).
5. 1 Cor. 14:34-36 – Women are to display their submission to male headship and learn quietly from those (qualified males only) responsible for the teaching ministry of the church.
6. 1 Tim. 2:8-15 – Women receive instruction with submissiveness rather than teaching or exercising authority over men (2:11-12). Women are to submit to male leadership and teaching because Adam was created first (2:13), and because Eve was deceived and sinned first (2:14).

Evidence that God's design was for male/female role differentiation

7. Eph. 5:22-33 – Wives are to be subject to their husbands in response to their submission to the Lordship of Christ (5:22) because the husband is head of the wife as Christ is head of the Church (5:23-24). When husbands truly love their wives and wives submit to their husbands, we see the return to what God intended in his creation.

8. 1 Pet. 3:7a – Women, is a “weaker vessel,” and she needs to be treated with tenderness and understanding as such. This implies that 1) while she is fully equal in essence (3:7b), she is constitutionally different from him as a woman (3:7a), and 2) the husband bears responsibility to care for his wife, indicating his leadership and primary responsibility in their relationship.

9. Trinitarian Analogy – Complementarians understand the Trinity to present an analogy to the male/female relationship, as God designed it. God is one in essence and three in persons. The three persons of the God-head are absolutely equal in essence but they are distinct in function.

Biblical Examples of Male/Female Role Differentiation

Despite the fact that sin has produced in woman an illegitimate desire to usurp the rightful authority God gave to man (Gen. 3:16), God has worked in Israel and in the Church to establish male-headship as the consistent and approved pattern for religious and home life.

1. Male leadership in Israel

God has called out men and held men responsible for religious leadership - Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, the 12 sons of Jacob as heads of the 12 tribes of Israel, Moses, Joshua, David, the male priestly order, the prophets to Israel and Judah, etc.

2. Male leadership with Christ

His choice of 12 men continues the pattern we observe in the OT, of distinguishing a certain level of spiritual leadership as gender-restrictive.

Biblical Examples of Male/Female Role Differentiation

Despite the fact that sin has produced in woman an illegitimate desire to usurp the rightful authority God gave to man (Gen. 3:16), God has worked in Israel and in the Church to establish male-headship as the consistent and approved pattern for religious and home life.

3. Male leadership in the Church

Paul explicitly restricts women from a certain level of spiritual leadership and instruction in the Church (1 Cor. 11:1-16, 1 Cor. 14:34-36, & 1 Tim. 2:8-15). This is reinforced by qualifications for eldership which requires that one be “the husband of one wife” (1 Tim 3:2 & Titus 1:6), indicating that only qualified men may serve as elders.

4. Male leadership in the home (Eph. 5:22-33, Col. 3:18-20, & 1 Pet. 3:1-7) each establishes the correctness of male-leadership in the home.

Creation story

Pre-fall:

- God created ***Humankind*** in his image (Gen. 1:26-27)
- Humankind was ***commissioined*** together (Gen. 1:28)
- The word ***helper*** (*ezer*) (Gen. 2:18) is also used 16 times with reference to God (Ex. 18:4 – my God is my *helper* Eliezer; Dt. 33:7, 26, 29; Ps. 20:2; 33:20; 70:5; 89:19; 115:9, 10, 11; 121:1, 2; 124:8; 146:5; Hos. 13:9). The most basic meaning of *ezer* is “to rescue/save” and “to be strong”
- “***suitable for him***” (Gen. 2:18) qualifies *ezer* – no subordination is implied, instead, it is a corresponding and equal partner in respect to his “aleness” and “commission”

Some interpretations (for)

1 Cor 14:34-25

- The view that seems best to me is to understand the speaking prohibited here to women to refer only to disruptive questions that wives (usually uneducated in the culture of Paul's time) were asking their husbands.
- This corresponds precisely with the resolution Paul offers (1 Cor. 14:35): “if they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home. . . .” Such disruptive questioning was also considered a disgrace in Paul's day in which it was widely believed that it was morally indiscreet for any wife to say anything on any subject in public.
- This view of disruptive questioning also fits well the specific context (1 Cor. 14:26–40) in which Paul is concerned about appropriateness and order, which permit genuine edification (note that 1 Cor. 14:26 expects everyone to participate).
- Thus, there are actually three injunctions to silence (1 Cor. 14:28, 30, 34), although many Bible translations use “silent” only in 1 Corinthians 14:34.

Some interpretations for

1 Tim. 2:8-15

- Verses 8-10 – culturally bound
- Why remove and isolate the proceeding verses from cultural?
- Verses 11-12 is a general prohibition on all women in all circumstances – can it be transcultural? Then there should be absolutely no women in any form of teaching or authority, viz. Sunday School, missions, etc.
- “silence” (11), “silent” (12) - “to settle down” (2 Thes. 3:12) in response to order of how things are done in normal practice
- “to have authority” (*authentein*) (12) – only used here (hapax legomenon) which refers to negative authority and not the usual active authority and could refer to abuse as noted in sexual activities (1 Tim. 4:3; 5:11-15) and uneducated women who tried to fool people (2 Tim. 3:6-7)
- Eve’s deception (2:14) is also referred to the deception of male false prophets and heretics (2 Cor. 11)
- 1 Tim. 2:15; 5:3-16; Titus 2:3-5 – the cultural role of women

Conclusion

We need to specifically consider:

1. Pre-fall; Restoration in Jesus; The eschatology
2. Biblical culture and context
3. Our faith tradition
4. Our worldview
5. Our interpretation

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