

Strauch, Alexander. *Men and Women: Equal Yet Different*. Littleton, CO: Lewis & Roth Publishers, 1999. 126 pp.

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Introduction

Men and Women: Equal Yet Different is already considered to be one of the best works representing the complementarian view of gender roles. The book is an easy read, following the format of a conversation between a college male student and an older member of his church. Strauch adds credibility to complementarian beliefs by working through the gender passages in the Bible. Similar to the older gentlemen in the narrative, the author, Alexander Strauch serves as an elder in a church in Littleton, Colorado, where he and his wife Marilyn have attended for over thirty years. He is an accomplished author of over ten books and Bible studies, ranging in topics from such as leadership, the New Testament church, and hospitality.

Summary

Strauch begins by providing a brief summary of the two main views regarding the gender passages: the complementarian view and the evangelical feminist view. The complementarian view emphasizes that God created men and women equally in His image to fulfill different roles. God created man to be a husband and father. He is responsible for providing for and protecting his family. In addition to being the head of his family, he is called to be the head of Christ's church. Likewise, a woman is fashioned to be a wife and mother. She is called to nurture and care for her family, to submit to her

husband, and to be his helper. This is the view to which Strauch holds and which he defends within his work. The evangelical feminist view is that God created men and women equally to bear the divine image. They believe that women's submissive role in marriage and restrictions in ministry are contradictory to biblical equality. While Strauch is quick to agree that women have been mistreated in society, he also notes that ignoring the creation order as an attempt to right the wrongs of gender discrimination is far from the correct solution.

Strauch emphasizes the consistency in the complementarian view throughout the Bible as he begins by explaining God's intention for marriage in Genesis 2. This text teaches that woman was created for the man and Adam was given headship over Eve. He also points out that in judgment after the fall, humans were warned that there would be a power struggle between genders. New Testament teachings (Ephesians 5, 1 Peter 3, Titus 2) of Jesus, Peter, and Paul all refer back to Genesis in answering questions about marriage. Women are to submit to their husbands and men are to honor their wives. Specifically, the husband is to be the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church, making Christ's love the standard for the husband's leadership.

In addition to marriage roles, Strauch also addresses the issue of leadership within the church. Strauch points out that Jesus Himself appointed 12 male disciples. Remembering that Jesus was a radical leader, if there was a time for Jesus to refute his belief of the creation order, He could have done it by appointing female apostles. Texts supporting his view include passages found predominantly within Paul's letters, but some from Luke's writings in Acts. Just as Jesus compared the husband and wife relationship to Christ's relationship with the church, Strauch points out that the church family should

be modeled after the home, exactly as Paul outlines in I Timothy 2. Men are called to be the leaders and teachers in the church, while women are to help men with their leadership roles and be servants in the church. In Romans 16, Phoebe is described as a servant in the church, which is comparable to a woman's role as a helper in the home. Titus 2 also instructs older women in the church to mentor and teach the younger women.

Critical Evaluation

The complementarian view accepts all gender passages in the Bible as truth, confirming the inerrancy of Scripture. On the other hand, the evangelical feminist view pits some passages of Scripture (i.e. Galations 3:28) against others (i.e. 1 Peter 3:1-7), defeating the idea of Scripture's infallibility. Some criticize Strauch's repetitiveness within the teachings of this work. However, this makes an indirect statement. Just as the Bible is consistent within its doctrine, Strauch is unvarying within his view. The reoccurring nature of the chapter teachings is a great strength.

The most respectful aspect of this work is that Strauch does not interject much of his own opinion into his writings. His arguments are completely based on the Scripture. Many authors get into trouble when they add too much of their own interpretation of the text into their writings. They run the risk of inaccurately interpreting Scripture or unnecessarily adding to the text. Strauch is very careful to hold to the content in the Bible alone.

Another strength of the book is the narrative nature, giving a personal touch to a scholarly discussion. Just the one or two pages of conversation between the college student and elder in the church add to the relevance and individual importance of the instruction. This book could easily be used and understood among lay church members

and new believers curious about gender discussion in the Bible.

However, Strauch's account is brief, so it is unable to provide the detail that some other complementarian works offer. It offers a brief outline and discussion of the text, but it is lacking in deep explanations. For scholars and theologians desiring detailed exegesis of these Scripture passages, there are other works that return to the original Greek and Hebrew languages for a more specific account of these texts. Strauch is frequently criticized for the brevity of this work, but such books are needed to explain the gender teachings on a more practical level. Along with being a good book to pass along to lay church members and new believers, Strauch offers insight for scholars on how to present this information in a way for others to understand.

Conclusion

While it is not the most detailed argument, it serves as a great summary and a quick read for someone questioning what to believe about the gender passages. Strauch is to be commended for creating a work that is a valuable tool in the scholarly circle and within the local church body. He provides adequate insight on all the major points, remaining consistent with the Bible and his own writings. It's a necessary addition to anyone's library who is concerned on the issues of biblical manhood and womanhood.

BIBLIOGRAPHY