



Building Consensus on Christian Leadership

Sarah Sumner offers a way to build consensus on the view of women in the church by laying out 12 assertions in her book *Men & Women in the Church*:

1. Both sides of the debate are radically revising church tradition. The notion of women being equal in personhood to men is a relatively novel idea, or rather, a biblical one that has only recently been renewed.
2. Both sides of the debate are trying to be biblical.
3. Both sides are also mixed. Complementarian thought is usually a mix of Bible and traditionalism. Egalitarian thought is usually a mix of Bible and feminism.
4. It is possible to affirm women leaders in the church without becoming a feminist. Feminism is about women's power. Christianity is about Christ's power.
5. It is possible to believe in complementarity of the sexes without reaffirming church tradition. Church tradition says that women are inferior; Christianity does not.
6. The Scriptures nowhere say to pursue biblical manhood or biblical womanhood. The Bible commands us rather to become like Christ (Phil. 2:5-11; 1 Peter 2:21-23)
7. There are no problem verses in the Bible. First Timothy 2 is inspired by God and therefore not a problem per se.
8. Neither side of the debate promotes a straightforward reading of 1 Timothy 2:12-15. Instead, both nuance their interpretations of the passage.
9. The word *head* in Ephesians 5 ("the husband is the head of the wife") does not mean "leader" or "source" or covering.
10. Many Christians, such as myself, have sinned by being prejudiced against women and partial to men. This kind of behavior is contrary to the teachings of Scripture.
11. The only way that Christians can resolve this debate is for each one of us to repent from our own sins.
12. Men and women in the church can begin to build consensus, but only through relationships of trust (1 Cor. 13:8).

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