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# Identity formation in mixed-gender leadership community: forming leadership relationships around a common identity and a shared biblical narrative

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GEORGE FOX UNIVERSITY

IDENTITY FORMATION IN MIXED-GENDER LEADERSHIP COMMUNITY:  
FORMING LEADERSHIP RELATIONSHIPS AROUND  
A COMMON IDENTITY AND A SHARED BIBLICAL NARRATIVE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO  
THE FACULTY OF GEORGE FOX EVANGELICAL SEMINARY  
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY

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PORTLAND, OREGON

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George Fox Evangelical Seminary  
George Fox University  
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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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DMin Dissertation

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This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

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has been approved by  
the Dissertation Committee on March 13, 2013  
for the degree of Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Spiritual Formation.

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## ABSTRACT

Christian leaders need to proactively address the manner in which men and women leaders work and lead together on ministry teams. Intentional identity formation is needed to create a healthy environment for men and women leaders. This thesis explores the spiritual formation of men and women leaders to discover how intentional identity formation in community can influence leadership relationships. Intentional identity formation in mixed-gender leadership community cultivates health, mutuality, and trust among men and women leaders in ministry. Theology must inform praxis so that men and women can lead and model a redemptive way forward through the community and the culture they create.

Chapter 1 explores how identity formation in the evangelical subculture shapes and forms men and women leaders in church and ministry. By starting with case studies, the chapter demonstrates the diversity of identity formation within the evangelical church and how it complicates leadership relationships between men and women.

Chapter 2 uncovers a common biblical and theological narrative for men and women found in the image of God. The image of God provides a biblical and theological foundation for identity formation of men and women leaders, shaping their identity and their leadership relationships.

Chapter 3 studies gender, the image of God, and the Trinity and how the interrelatedness of the Godhead informs the identity and relationships between men and

women. The concept of *perichoresis* is explored as informing relationships between men and women.

Chapter 4 studies Jesus, the perfect image bearer of God and his relationships with men and women, revealing the ongoing trajectory of relationships restored in the image of God. Jesus' relationships with men and women are explored, and his relationships with women are emphasized.

Chapter 5 explores the seemingly contradictory messages of Paul. While Paul's life reveals a partnership with women in ministry and leadership, his instructions to the church indicates otherwise. Paul's ministry relationships, the Greco-Roman hierarchy, and the Greco-Roman household code are studied to gain insight into Paul's potentially contradictory instructions.

Chapter 6 studies how leadership relationships and leadership identity influence organizational culture. The influence of relationships on organizational culture will be explored. Four particular dynamics of relationships are discussed as necessary to change organizational culture for men and women in the church.

Chapter 7 offers a spiritual formation model and illustrates how the discoveries of this thesis can be implemented through life in community. The formation model provides a context for developing the relational dynamics of Chapter 6. Chapter 7 shows how an intentional spiritual formation model supports the identity formation of men and women leaders and enhances the health and mutuality of church and ministry leadership teams.

Chapter 8 concludes by presenting practical ways leaders in church and ministry organizations can implement the relational dynamics and formation model identified. Churches and ministry organizations are in a unique position to model a way forward,

demonstrating that identity formation in community is a practical theological construct that transforms lives, ministries, and in turn influences culture.

CHAPTER ONE  
INTRODUCTION

*We dream the wrong dreams, arrange our lives in light of the wrong story.<sup>1</sup>*  
--Byron Borger

**Vignette One<sup>2</sup>**

Beth spent the past two years on a ministry team with her coworkers, John and Tom. She looked forward to strategizing and dreaming about ministry, all the while enjoying the company of her coworkers and the chance to make a difference in the lives of others. Rarely did gender seem to be an issue. Instead, she felt encouragement and support as the team shared their lives and ministry endeavors with one another. They were partners in ministry, but also friends. Beth enjoyed her work relationships and the trust and security that came with it.

After a new staff hire, things began to change. Chuck's personality and perspective changed the dynamics of ministry meetings and team relationships. The comfortable relationships Beth previously experienced began to shift as Chuck's dominant, machismo presence changed the relationship dynamics on the team. The other men accommodated his attitude, and an aura of competition and hierarchy began to develop. Although Beth was more experienced as a leader and minister, she found that Chuck was intent on teaching her and instructing her in how to do ministry. Although she

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<sup>1</sup> Byron Borger, "A Ruminantion, Good Books Mentioned, and Then Two Great Books Reviewed," Hearts and Minds Books, entry posted June 12, 2012, [http://www.heartsandmindsbooks.com/booknotes/a\\_ruminantion\\_good\\_books\\_mentio/](http://www.heartsandmindsbooks.com/booknotes/a_ruminantion_good_books_mentio/) (accessed June 16, 2012).

<sup>2</sup> Vignettes One and Two are compilations of actual stories told to the author and not solely the story of one particular individual. The names of individuals have been changed.

was open to getting to know him and sharing ministry ideas, she found that Chuck was resistant. For him, leadership influence happened in only one direction—from him to her. She tried to voice her perspective and concerns, addressing him as an equal coworker, but it only brought distance to their relationship. Even though she tried to talk with her team leader about the change, he did not seem to notice or understand. Instead, he encouraged Beth to continue to get to know Chuck, hoping their relationship would improve over time.

Things did not get better. The relationship became more distant and the team changed, becoming less relational and more territorial. While Beth continued to enjoy her ministry position and relationships with her volunteer leaders, she found her satisfaction and acceptance within the staff team diminishing. Frustrated and lonely, Beth wished that things could be different. Although she deeply sensed and expressed her concern about the changes, she did not have the ability to influence the team toward change. Slowly, her presence diminished on the team as the men continued to vie for power, position, and attention.

### **Vignette Two**

“Why do I have to be this cautious with my coworkers?” Jen wondered. A new staff policy was instituted at the church where she was employed stating that men and women could not be alone together in the work environment, including lunches off campus and riding in cars. When meeting alone in a room with a person of the opposite sex, the blinds had to be open and scheduled when others were present in the building. When asked if this also included the mixed-gender mentoring relationships she had in her

ministry, there was a pause. Unable to answer her question, the senior leadership promised to get back to her.

The new rules compounded her frustration over the lack of relationship with her male coworkers. While they communicated regularly about ministry related tasks, their relationships were limited beyond that. They did not know one another at deep levels, including their struggles or their needs. When attempting to cultivate community among her staff team and senior leaders, her requests for deeper relationships and team connections were met with “we don’t have the same need” or “we don’t have time.” Instead, they suggested she needed to be in a small group; those needs would be met there, and most likely, among other women. Interactions with the senior staff remained superficial; they knew information about one another but did not connect at deeper, more personal levels. She knew the reluctance was not only about time but also gender and what was appropriate for relationships between men and women in the church.

The lack of relationship only added to the challenge of resolving conflicts. Because of the lack of depth in her relationship with the men and, in particular the senior pastor, Jen was reluctant to approach him with concerns and issues. When conflicts arose, the problems were frequently minimized or said to be her issues without taking into consideration the relational dynamics behind the conflict. While Jen was willing to be open and share from her heart, she always felt the vulnerability was one sided. Over time, the one-sided openness felt less and less safe. When her vulnerability was used against her, she was heartbroken. How could she remain in this type of church environment? The tension between staying and leaving weighed on her, yet she knew that remaining meant losing a part of who she was. She began contemplating next steps, dreaming of how

ministry might be different if work relationships within the church could be cultivated in deep and meaningful ways.

### **Vignette Three<sup>3</sup>**

After our last Restoring Eve meeting, the women asked, “Why don’t you have anything for men?” Restoring Eve, a ministry of spiritual formation for women leaders helped women understand their identity and story in light of the Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation narrative of scripture. Learning who they were created to be and the dignity inherent in each of them, along with hearing intimate stories of God’s deep and rich encounters with women in scripture was new to many of them. They regularly asked why they had not heard this biblical teaching before. While each woman who participates in Restoring Eve attends an evangelical church that has done much to nurture her relationship with Christ and her ministry skills, it has done little to form her identity as a woman beyond the roles and functions of a wife and mother. As the Restoring Eve women allowed their identity to be shaped by the narrative of Genesis 1 and 2, they began to discover the wonder of who God created them to be as women. They experienced a new kind of freedom as they learned to embrace themselves as God sees them: fully known and fully loved.

As the women considered their relationships with men, including spouses and ministry coworkers, they recognized a different formation model. Their husbands were predominantly formed through a model that calls them to be the head and leader of their household. As the women in our group embraced the vision of dignity and a co-equal

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<sup>3</sup> Vignette Three is a compilation of my own story told to me by various women who have participated in *Restoring Eve: A Ministry of Spiritual Formation for Women Leaders*.



partnership for men and women, they wished their husbands could share in what they were learning. The women were frustrated because they were growing into a new identity, all without the participation of their husbands.

The women participants who were on staff in a church began to realize that identity formation is never talked about on their staff teams. It is not avoided; rather, it is not even considered to be a foundational need for them as leaders. As they shared with their coworkers what they learned in *Restoring Eve*, the women wished they had a common means to deepen their ability to learn and grow together in identity formation. In conversations with me, they expressed a desire for their staff team to be on the same page. “Is there a formation model that can enhance our ability to talk about issues of gender and deepen our ability to relate and lead together?”

### **The Context**

The stories of these men, women, and their circumstances are not unusual. As I interact with a variety of women leaders in predominantly evangelical, nondenominational churches, they express concern and despair over the state of relationships between men and women in the church. As leaders in the evangelical church, they find themselves frustrated by hierarchy, limitations, poor relationships, and a lack of spiritual formation among those with whom they live, work, and lead.

How does this impact woman in ministry? Jim Henderson, in *The Resignation of Eve*, writes that many women leaders who are frustrated by these circumstances and limitations fall into three categories: 1) They are resigning from their jobs, 2) they

acquiesce and are resigned to stay despite their frustrations and limitations<sup>4</sup> or 3) some have “re-signed” and are choosing to re-engage their churches or other churches in the process of change by leading and influencing despite opposition.<sup>5</sup>

My own story is that I have resigned. However, despite my choice to leave a church staff position, my desire is to help pave a better way for men and women in the church. I care about the community called the church. I care about how men and women relate to each other within the church and in leadership communities. As the vignettes illustrate, while having women in all aspects of leadership is a positive step, it does not necessarily change the dynamics on ministry teams. Unspoken and unacknowledged gender issues that are both interpersonally and leadership driven, rise to the surface.

The stories demonstrate the confusion about gender and relationships between men and women in the church. Underlying the interactions of the men and women is a lack of clarity about their identity and how it impacts relationships, perspectives on gender, leadership, and spiritual formation. While there is movement among some evangelical churches to include more women in all levels of leadership, there has been little done to prepare churches and leaders for the identity challenges that can erupt in this transition. Without addressing underlying gender and relationship issues, adding more women leaders can potentially lead to conflict, confusion, and frustration rather than mutuality, vulnerability, and trust. If churches are going to be a place of health and wholeness for men and women leaders, identity formation needs to be addressed.

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<sup>4</sup> Jim Henderson, *The Resignation of Eve: What If Adam's Rib is No Longer Willing to be the Backbone of the Church* (Austin, TX: BarnaBooks, 2012), 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

Kathy Escobar, co-pastor of The Refuge, a church in Denver, Colorado, speaks to the need. She agrees that changing the dynamic between men and women leaders begins with enhancing their relationships in community. Recently she wrote that having women leaders in the church is not only good for women, it is also healthy and good for men. She suggests being in a community that tears down hierarchy and creates an environment where men and women “come alongside” one another is a community in which the dignity of women is restored. In turn, the same restoration of dignity, in new and fresh ways, is offered to men.<sup>6</sup>

Dan Brennan, author of *Sacred Unions, Sacred Passions*, responds similarly. “Instead of reinforcing outdated stereotypes of masculinity and femininity accompanied by over-romanticized views of marriage, the Christian community ought to reconsider the practice of spiritual friendship where men and women are co-creators, co-equal, and co-commissioned to advance God’s beauty, goodness, peace, and justice in this world.”<sup>7</sup> The goal of Brennan’s book is to encourage men and women in the evangelical church toward alternative ways for men and women to exist together in close, intimate, friendship and community.

While positive changes are happening, it does not imply that all churches want to change. For many, it is not the case and this thesis will not seek to address those churches and organizations that do not seek to promote women as equal in all spheres of community life and leadership. Also, this thesis will not address gender issues as they relate to homosexual and lesbian identity issues and relationships. For many churches and

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<sup>6</sup> Kathy Escobar, “Replacing the “F” Word with the “D” Word,” Kathy Escobar, entry posted March 20, 2012, <http://kathyescobar.com/2012/03/20/replacing-the-f-word-with-the-d-word-no-not-those-ones/> (accessed May 10, 2012).

<sup>7</sup> Dan Brennan, *Sacred Unions, Sacred Passions* (Elgin, IL: Faith Dance Publishing, 2010), 19.

organizations, these issues remain places of theological ideology where change is not welcome.

However, among some churches, there is a growing openness and advocacy for women in all spheres of life and leadership in the church. The advocacy is not by women alone; many men are advocating for women in leadership. Author and theologian, Scot McKnight, has begun to pave the way for change among a more conservative evangelical audience. Both through his blog, *Jesus Creed*,<sup>8</sup> and also through his intentional writing about women in leadership in *The Blue Parakeet*, Mc Knight establishes a context that advocates and advances the need for women in leadership that reaches more broadly into evangelical circles. Fuller Seminary author and theologian, J. R. Daniel Kirk, is also giving voice to the need. After having recently been a guest speaker at a Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE)<sup>9</sup> event, his blog post challenged men to speak on behalf of women in leadership, choosing to no longer be silent or distant advocates but to instead intentionally work toward including women in all aspects of church and ministry leadership. In fact, he went so far as to say, “If you (the male pastor/leader) are not working to change what women can do, you are promoting and sustaining the sexism you deride in private.”<sup>10</sup>

If, in fact, advocacy leads to more women in leadership within evangelical churches, what type of environment are they entering? The vignettes at the beginning of

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<sup>8</sup> Scot McKnight’s blog, *Jesus Creed*, can be found at <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/jesuscreed/>

<sup>9</sup> Christians for Biblical Equality is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to affirm and promote “the biblical truth that all believers—without regard to gender, ethnicity or class—must exercise their God-given gifts with equal authority and equal responsibility in church, home and world.” <http://www.cbeinternational.org/?q=content/our-mission-and-history> (accessed May 11, 2012).

<sup>10</sup> J. R. Daniel Kirk, “A Time to Speak,” *Storied Theology*, entry posted April 29, 2012, <http://www.jrdkirk.com/2012/04/29/a-time-to-speak/> (accessed May 10, 2012).

the chapter could easily be representative of environments that are open to women in leadership at all levels, yet remain rife with problems. While having more women in leadership answers one question, it does not answer the question of whether or not the community in which they participate will be a healthy and growing place for men and women, together.

### **Identity Formation And Gender**

While each vignette reveals multiple areas where improvement is needed, the underlying issue that is often overlooked is how identity formation takes place among men and women in the church and how it impacts their leadership relationships. In fact, in my eleven years of working on a mixed-gender church staff team, I can't remember one time when identity and gender was intentionally discussed or considered a topic of leadership development or spiritual formation. It seems to be the elephant in the living room on many mixed-gender staff teams.

To not address this issue is to neglect a question that is significant to spiritual formation and community formation as a whole. Klyne R. Snodgrass, in his article, "Jesus and a Hermeneutic of Identity," goes so far as to say identity studies are essential to Christian formation and, in fact, are the essence of all spiritual formation. He says, "for a society in which many people have no idea who they are and where many more find their identity in their possessions, their sports teams, or their job, the church needs to focus on identity."<sup>11</sup> He writes that the function of Christian scripture is to shape and

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<sup>11</sup> Klyne R. Snodgrass, "Jesus and a Hermeneutic of Identity," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 168 (April-June 2011), 131.

form a person's identity.<sup>12</sup> Many Christians don't know who they are nor understand how scripture shapes their identities. Christians need to become a people who see the Bible as revealing their identity. Snodgrass calls it a "hermeneutic of identity."<sup>13</sup>

While Snodgrass acknowledges that gender is part of identity formation,<sup>14</sup> he does not elaborate on it. He recognizes that identity formation is always embodied and always lived,<sup>15</sup> but he does not address how identity formation impacts relationships between men and women in the church. He also acknowledges that one's relationship with Jesus and with others is significant to identity formation, but also does not speak to the gendered nature of relationships.<sup>16</sup> While identity formation is essential to discipleship, how gender impacts discipleship is not expanded upon in his work.

It is important to define identity and identity formation. Identity is "the fact of being who or what a person or thing is."<sup>17</sup> Dick Keyes in *Beyond Identity* writes that identity comes from the same root as the word, "identical," and means "sameness". When used psychologically, it refers to an internal cohesion and self-sameness.<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, Webster's Dictionary describes sameness as "oneness."<sup>19</sup> Identity provides human beings

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>14</sup> Klyne R. Snodgrass, "Introduction to a Hermeneutics of Identity," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 168 (January-March, 2011), 11.

<sup>15</sup> Klyne R. Snodgrass, "Jesus and a Hermeneutic of Identity," 144.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Oxford Dictionaries, "Identity," [http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/american\\_english/identity?region=us&q=identity](http://oxforddictionaries.com/definition/american_english/identity?region=us&q=identity) (accessed August 15, 2012).

<sup>18</sup> Dick Keyes, *Beyond Identity: Finding your Way in the Image and Character of God* (Cumbria, UK: Paternoster Press, 1998), 1.

<sup>19</sup> Meriam-Webster Dictionary, "Identity," <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/identity> (accessed August 15, 2012).

with both internal and external cohesiveness that allows men and women to maintain a sense of self in a world that is constantly changing.<sup>20</sup>

Identity formation refers to those things that shape and form who a person is.<sup>21</sup> It includes gender, personality, history and story, relationships and commitments, boundaries, how a person changes and is transformed, and includes some sense of the future and where one is headed.<sup>22</sup> Identity impacts how people interact with one another and perceive others. For those who follow Jesus, it includes understanding how one's personhood and story connects with the story of God and how it impacts an understanding of one's self, both alone and in relationship with others. In fact, Calvin's opening words in the *Institute of the Christian Religion* states, "There is no deep knowing of God without a deep knowing of self and no deep knowing of self without a deep knowing of God."<sup>23</sup> A person's true identity cannot be understood outside of a relationship with God.

Within the overarching concept of identity and identity formation is gender identity. Gender identity is more than whether or not one is male or female, designating one's sex. It is influenced by a variety of determinants including social structures, religious upbringing, ethnicity, employment, and family.<sup>24</sup> The formation of men and women does not take place in a vacuum. External influences impact an understanding of

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<sup>20</sup> Keyes, 4.

<sup>21</sup> Snodgrass, "Introduction to a Hermeneutics of Identity", 11.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 11-14.

<sup>23</sup> John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1536 ed., translated by Ford Lewis Battles (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 15.

<sup>24</sup> Wikipedia, "Identity Formation," [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Identity\\_formation](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Identity_formation) (accessed August 15, 2012).

gender and customarily appropriate behaviors in relationships with those of the opposite sex. In American or western cultures, gender tends to be viewed on a masculine and feminine or binary scale.<sup>25</sup> Gender influences an understanding of what is appropriate or inappropriate for one who is male or one who is female and the “cultural notions of what it means to look or behave or feel ‘like a man’ or ‘like a woman.’”<sup>26</sup>

Studies tend to give mixed reviews on whether or not there are more differences or similarities between men and women. While the old phrase, “Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus” may feel correct, in reality, studies are mixed on whether or not this is true. Neuroscientist, Lise Eliot in *Pink Brain Blue Brain*, acknowledges there are differences between men and women and admits it became more personal after having her own children. Yet she also recognizes, as a scientist, that the differences that have the most impact, such as cognitive skills (reading, speaking, math and mechanical abilities) and interpersonal skills (empathy, risk-taking and competitiveness) are heavily shaped through learning. While differences may originate from biases in brain function, they are significantly amplified through role models and other significant influences received from childhood onward.<sup>27</sup> Janet Shibley Hyde in her study entitled, *The Gender Similarities Hypothesis*, demonstrates that men and women are similar on most but not all psychological variables, claiming men and women are more alike than different. She

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<sup>25</sup> David Herman, Brian McHale, and James Phelan, eds. *Teaching Narrative Theory* (New York, NY: The Modern Language Association of America, 2010), 237.

<sup>26</sup> Herman, 238.

<sup>27</sup> Lise Eliot, *Pink Brain Blue Brain: How Small Differences Grow Into Troublesome Gaps and What We Can Do About It* (New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishing Co., 2009), 6-7.



contends “overinflated claims” of gender differences can be costly to one’s relationship and vocation.<sup>28</sup>

On the flip side, a recent study focusing on personality traits determined that the differences far outweigh the similarities. In a study of 10,000 men and women (50.1% female and 49.9% male) it was found that women scored much higher than men in sensitivity, warmth, and apprehension while men scored higher in emotional stability, rule-consciousness, dominance, and vigilance.<sup>29</sup> The study concludes that sex differences in human personalities have been underestimated. Researchers Del Giudice, Booth, and Irving say studies that minimize differences between men and women should be rejected based on inadequate methodology.<sup>30</sup>

While extensive studies and research are available on gender sameness and differences, the outcomes are conflicting and inconclusive at best. While gender differences are felt and experienced, gender commonalities are also present and identified. The choice to manipulate the data to enhance one’s own perspective is possible. Yet, the outcomes of the research free one to recognize that the challenges of gender are not solely present within the church. Science and psychology find themselves both intrigued and confused by the conclusions. Although studies are inconclusive, they do add to an understanding of the similarities and differences between men and women.

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<sup>28</sup> Janet Shibley Hyde, “The Gender Similarities Hypothesis,” *American Psychologist* 60, no. 6, (September 2005): 581.

<sup>29</sup> Dario Maestripieri, “Games Primates Play: Gender Differences in Personality Are Larger Than Previously Thought,” *Psychology Today*, January 14, 2012, <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/games-primates-play/201201/gender-differences-in-personality-are-larger-previously-thought> (accessed August 17, 2012).

<sup>30</sup> Marco Del Giudice, Tom Booth, and Paul Irving, “The Distance between Mars and Venus: Measuring Global Sex Differences in Personality,” *PlosOne: A Peer-Reviewed Open Access Journal*, January 4, 2012. <http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0029265> (accessed August 17, 2012).

## Identity Formation In The Church

While science and psychology present their own data, the church also has a perspective and history on gender and gender issues. Broadly and historically, the spiritual formation of men and women has been based on roles in hierarchy rather than relationships of mutuality. While the biblical story begins with the act of creation, from Genesis 3 onward the entire biblical story is rooted in a culture of patriarchy that shapes and molds the design and structure of men and women in relationship. Patriarchy has shaped a model of identity formation between men and women based on roles and authority rather than their common humanity and creation design.

While some churches consider patriarchy a model for biblical marriage and church leadership, others see it as temporary and cultural, not a biblical model for today. Gilbert Bilezekian in *Beyond Sex Roles* finds patriarchy to be a temporary part of the old covenant that is reversed by redemption in Christ.<sup>31</sup> Scot McKnight, in *The Blue Parakeet*, sees patriarchy as a cultural expression of the gospel not to be emulated today. He writes, “Do we seek to retrieve the cultural world and those cultural expressions, or do we live the same gospel in a different way in a different day?”<sup>32</sup> The answer to his rhetorical question is obvious. Daniel Kirk recently addressed the issue of patriarchal authority when responding to a post by Jared Wilson on The Gospel Coalition webpage<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: What the Bible Says about a Woman's Place in Church and Family* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), 79.

<sup>32</sup> Scot McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You Read Your Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publications, 2008), 159.

<sup>33</sup> Jared Wilson, “The Polluted Water of Fifty Shades of Grey, Etc.,” The Gospel Driven Church Blog, entry posted July 13, 2012, <http://thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/gospeldrivenchurch/2012/07/13/the-polluted-waters-of-50-shades-of-grey-etc/> (accessed August 8, 2012). (text since removed)

where Wilson spoke to authority and submission, in particular, in marriage and the sexual relationship.<sup>34</sup> Kirk is concerned that The Gospel Coalition instructs those in the church to “emulate the patriarchal cultures from which the biblical texts arise.”<sup>35</sup> He goes on to define patriarchy as:

... a web of cultural expressions tied to the common assumption that men are better than women: smarter, more competent, stronger, morally superior, inherently more valuable. Patriarchy is a web of cultural expressions designed to maintain people “in their place” by the exercise of power or passive submission appropriate to their inherent value.<sup>36</sup>

While some in the church embrace patriarchy, McKnight divides patriarchy into two camps. “Hard patriarchy” is a hermeneutic that understands the biblical cultural context as God’s original design, ordaining all men to be leaders and women to submit to the leadership of men. Whereas, “soft patriarchy” believes the biblical context is cultural but the principles contained in them are permanent. Soft patriarchy, while affirming the importance of submission and gender roles, also gives women greater freedom outside the home and in the culture at large.<sup>37</sup>

Among those who call themselves evangelical, there are two larger categories describing the relationships between men and women in the church. Egalitarians<sup>38</sup> (those

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<sup>34</sup> Daniel Kirk, “Sexual Conquering Is Rape,” *Storied Theology*, entry posted July 18, 2012, <http://www.jrdkirk.com/2012/07/18/sexual-conquering-is-rape/> (accessed August 8, 2012).

<sup>35</sup> Daniel Kirk, “Theologizing and Cultural Transformation,” *Storied Theology*, entry posted July 21, 2012, <http://www.jrdkirk.com/2012/07/21/theologizing-and-cultural-transformation/> (accessed August 8, 2012).

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> McKnight, 159-160.

<sup>38</sup> *Christians for Biblical Equality* (CBE) is the most prominent organization promoting the egalitarian perspective. Their mission statement reads, “CBE affirms and promotes the biblical truth that all believers—without regard to gender, ethnicity or class—must exercise their God-given gifts with equal authority and equal responsibility in church, home and world.” To find out more, go to [www.cbeinternational.org](http://www.cbeinternational.org). (accessed August 13, 2012).

who affirm the co-equal partnership of men and women in life, ministry, and marriage) may often worship side by side with those who are complementarian<sup>39</sup> (men and women have equal value but different functions, predominantly within the church and marriage relationship, similar to soft patriarchy). Beyond egalitarians and complementarians, there are many in between who embrace a mixture of the two theological points of view.

The above variations in identity formation between men and women lead to confusion within the church. Not only is identity formation among men and women confusing in the church, it is often neglected and absent in leadership training and spiritual formation. If leaders are not intentionally addressing the topic, congregants are often left in the dark to sort out their own perspectives on mixed-gender relationships and leadership among men and women in the church.

### **Men And Women In The Evangelical Church**

A random survey of websites from a number of large, evangelical churches demonstrates a variety of ways men and women are represented in leadership and in congregations. For many, issues of gender are not specifically included in their statement of beliefs or their policy. Saddleback Church in Orange County, California does not use gender inclusive language when writing about what they believe as a church.<sup>40</sup> Yet, on their Leadership Academy page the language is more inclusive, speaking to those who

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<sup>39</sup> The *Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* is the most prominent organization promoting the complementarian perspective. Their understanding of this position as posted on their webpage reads, “the complementarian position...affirms that men and women are equal in the image of God, but maintain complementary differences in role and function. In the home, men lovingly are to lead their wives and family as women intelligently are to submit to the leadership of their husbands. In the church, while men and women share equally in the blessings of salvation, some governing and teaching roles are restricted to men.” To find out more, go to <http://www.cbmw.org/>. (accessed August 13, 2012).

<sup>40</sup> Saddleback Church, “What We Believe,” <http://www.saddleback.com/aboutsaddleback/whatwebelieve/> (accessed August 13, 2012).

are trained through the program as participants, not designating male or female in their information.<sup>41</sup> Willow Creek Community Church specifically states that men and women are welcome in all aspects of church leadership based on their gifts.<sup>42</sup> North Pointe Community Church writes that they are governed by a board of elders but does not state how the board is comprised.<sup>43</sup> Often churches are hesitant to publically state their policy on men and women in leadership, knowing their congregants come from a variety of backgrounds and perspectives. For some, it remains a touchy issue and remains hidden when one initially visits and explores a congregation or their website.

Beyond leadership policy, evangelical churches provide separate gender and mixed-gender programs for men and women. Many churches have separate women's groups and men's groups. Often these ministries specifically address the felt needs and the discipleship needs of men or women. While the segregation of men and women into single-gender groups provides opportunity to connect based on affinity and common interests, other men and women are disenfranchised by the process, finding the groups too narrowly segregated based on traditional interests (i.e. sports for men and scrapbooking for women). In my own life, I have male and female friends who have voiced their frustration about traditional representations, feeling they don't fit the mold.

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<sup>41</sup> Saddleback Church, "Commissioned: Saddleback Church Leadership Academy," <http://www.saddleback.com/aboutsaddleback/leadershipacademy/> (accessed August 13, 2012).

<sup>42</sup> Willow Creek Community Church, "What Willow Believes," <http://www.willowcreek.org/aboutwillow/what-willow-believes> (accessed August 13, 2012).

<sup>43</sup> North Pointe Community Church, "What Form of Government Does Northe Point Community Church Operate Under?," [http://www.northpoint.org/faqs/page/C85#faq\\_575](http://www.northpoint.org/faqs/page/C85#faq_575) (accessed August 13, 2012).

Ruth Haley Barton in her book *Equal to the Task* writes that she always preferred being in discussions with men but was relegated to the kitchen, which was less appealing.<sup>44</sup>

Some churches offer men's and women's ministries that intentionally address identity formation. A popular church in my area uses materials written by Dr. Robert Lewis, founder of Men's Fraternity, a ministry of identity formation for men. Men's Fraternity offers a series of curriculum (authored by Lewis) intended to shape a more "authentic manhood."<sup>45</sup> While the material intends to offer healing and wholeness for men, it uses a complementarian model, defining the man as the leader and head of his home. The complementary series for women, entitled *The New Eve* was also written by Robert Lewis. It provides Lewis' perspective of "biblical womanhood" where he voices concern with women's attempt to "have it all," giving less and less attention to their homes.<sup>46</sup> He offers this instruction, all the while acknowledging that women are beginning to surpass men in areas of education and business ownership.<sup>47</sup> To Lewis, this transition is the beginning of the end of stable family life.<sup>48</sup> He also identifies women who invest in their careers and choose not to have children as choosing not to invest in their primary calling as mothers.<sup>49</sup> For Lewis, women have distinct gender roles that fall

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<sup>44</sup> Ruth Haley Barton, *Equal to the Task: Men and Women in Partnership* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 20.

<sup>45</sup> Men's Fraternity Classic: Authentic Manhood, <http://www.mensfraternity.com/>, (accessed August 13, 2012).

<sup>46</sup> Robert Lewis, *The New Eve: Choosing God's Best for Your Life* (Nashville, TN: B & H Publishing, 2008), 8.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 5, 6.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

along the traditional gender lines of being a wife and mother. Employment outside the home should not interfere with her “feminine calling.”<sup>50</sup>

John and Stasi Eldredge in their books, *Wild at Heart* and *Captivating*, also seek to provide a biblically informed understanding of gender relationships between men and women. While writing of the dignity men and women have through their gendered design and longings, more often than not they stereotype men and women into roles that align with romance novels rather than Scripture. Eldredge writes, “Adventure, with all its requisite danger and wildness, is deeply written into the souls of men.”<sup>51</sup> He understands gender to be part of the soul of a man or woman, and is revealed through men longing to live dangerous lives and women longing to be captivating.<sup>52</sup> In a critical review of the popular series, Byron Borger states the gendered claims of Eldredge’s books are not biblical. For instance, Eldredge insists each man longs for a beauty to rescue. Yet Borger says nowhere is this image of a woman or man portrayed in Scripture; it is a view laden with western cultural assumptions. Instead, he argues that the only one able to rescue us is Jesus.<sup>53</sup>

While the role and function of gender continues to be a cause for debate within the church, others are offering a different way. Robert Hicks in *The Christian Family in Changing Times* says scripture does not reveal one consistent gender and family model throughout the biblical story. He challenges the perspective that there are biblically

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> John Eldredge, *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Secrets of a Man’s Soul* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2001), 5.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 17,18.

<sup>53</sup> Byron Borger, “John Eldredge’s Wild at Heart: A Critique,” Hearts and Minds Books, entry posted June 1, 2002, [http://www.heartsandmindsbooks.com/reviews/john\\_eldredges\\_wild\\_at\\_heart\\_a/](http://www.heartsandmindsbooks.com/reviews/john_eldredges_wild_at_heart_a/) (accessed August 17, 2012).

assigned “roles” within the family unit. In fact, he says “a role is something that society determines and has nothing to do with biblical authority.”<sup>54</sup> Instead, what the Bible does teach is the concept of responsibility. He understands Ephesians 5 as instruction on the husband’s “responsibility” to love his wife as Christ loved the church. The context or manner in which they conduct their marriage is up to them; the charge or responsibility within the marriage is to love as Christ loves.<sup>55</sup> Psychologist Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen in *Gender and Grace*, adds to this by stating that appropriate behavior for men and women varies *without* dismissing gender roles. In fact, she writes, all cultures define gender roles and “the constant invention and reinvention of gender roles is an expression of our creation-based sense that men and women need each other.”<sup>56</sup> Her concern is when gender roles move from helpful functions to “cages in which God never intended for us to be confined.”<sup>57</sup> Gender roles are present, but they need to remain flexible.

Ruth Haley Barton, in *Equal to the Task*, advocates for improved and deepening relationships for men and women in leadership and the church. She says men and women have a deep desire to be in community and partnership with each other but often don’t know how to make it happen. She writes, “When our relationships are not working, we are not yet all we were created to be.”<sup>58</sup> Her concern is that fear of sexuality and the tradition of segregating men and women into same-sex communities does not allow for a

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<sup>54</sup> Robert M. Hicks, *The Christian Family in Changing Times: The Myths, Models and Mystery of Family Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 55.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, *Gender and Grace: Love, Work, and Parenting in a Changing World* (Madison, WI: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 69.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 70.

<sup>58</sup> Barton, 15.



deepening of relationships and understanding of one another. The continued segregation feeds the cultural myth that sexual urges are too powerful to be controlled. “Neither the misuse of sexuality nor segregation into male-only or female-only friendships and small groups has served us well. Both patterns leave us starving for healing and community.”<sup>59</sup> She advocates that men and women come together as a “journey of the heart”<sup>60</sup> and not an academic exercise. In fact, she goes so far as to say, “before men and women can *accomplish* things together; we must learn to *be together* in love, in compassion, in truth, in body, in strength, in vulnerability—in God.”<sup>61</sup>

Because of the confusion, misunderstanding, and lack of clarity in how men and women relate to one another in ministry and leadership, how can and should the church and leaders respond? If prescribed gender roles are no longer the manner in which one’s identity is shaped in the dominant western culture and the Christian faith, how can evangelicals who want to be more gender inclusive shape a biblical construct for identity formation among men and women in the church and, in particular, among men and women leaders?

### **Proposing A Solution**

It is this author’s premise that while inviting women into all levels of church leadership is needed, ministry leaders need to proactively address the manner in which men and women work and lead together. Intentional identity formation is needed in order to create a healthy environment for men and women leaders. This thesis studies the

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

spiritual formation of men and women leaders to discover how intentional identity formation in community can influence leadership relationships. Intentional identity formation in mixed-gender leadership community cultivates health, mutuality, and trust among men and women leaders in ministry. Theology must inform praxis so that men and women can lead and model a redemptive way forward through the community and the culture they create.

While identity formation is important, intentional identity formation does not happen by default with men and women leaders. The lack of identity formation with mixed-gender teams leads to tensions and misperceptions, hindering progress toward mutuality, trust, and vulnerability, qualities of healthy relationships.<sup>62</sup> Leadership communities often do not engage in identity formation because leaders have not identified a biblical narrative that focuses on a common identity rather than gender differences. By utilizing stereotypical roles and gender traits, leaders miss the opportunity to identify a narrative that focuses on a common humanity. By focusing on their common humanity rather than gender differences, ministry teams can cultivate a common identity and common narrative that forms and shapes leaders in community.

Another reason identity formation does not readily happen in leadership communities is due to a lack of understanding of how to appropriately handle the relationship questions and tensions that may arise on mixed-gender teams. Constructing hard pressed boundaries that protect and keep members safe rather than wrestling through relationship tensions that naturally develop hinders the ability of men and women to develop mature, adult relationships between leaders. While Ruth Haley Barton

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<sup>62</sup> Healthy relationships are characterized by mutuality, differentiation, vulnerability and love, all of which enhance trust in relationships. These qualities will be explained in Chapter 6.

acknowledges the reality and challenges leaders to address it, most leaders have not cultivated the skills or wisdom to move into this vulnerable place. It is easier to remain divided and unknown by one's opposite sex peers than to wade into deeper relationships, emotional intimacy, and the potential for conflict and misunderstanding. By choosing not to engage relationships in this manner, men and women limit their growth and emotional maturation as leaders and the growth and maturation of those they lead. Leaders also do not learn to love one another well.

Lastly, intentional identity formation does not happen because leaders lack a formation model that unites both genders in a process of identity formation and spiritual transformation. If men and women choose to engage in identity formation, how do they proceed? How do they avoid it becoming just another intellectual exercise or staff project? Without a formation model to guide and enhance the process, mixed-gender staff teams can potentially wade into unfamiliar territory and stop short of the kind of growth that enhances their overall leadership experience and transforms their leadership and church communities.

If men and women leaders, made in the image of God, embrace a common identity implemented through an intentional spiritual formation model, wholeness, mutuality, trust, and fruitfulness, can develop. The efforts of leaders currently working toward an egalitarian community for men and women in the church can not only live it but also experience the transformative nature of community through intentionally formative relationships with one another.

## CHAPTER TWO

### THE IMAGE OF GOD AND A COMMON IDENTITY

*In reading the Bible, we Christians find ourselves presented with a vision of the world, a world that is the world of a particular sort of God, a world in the context of which our own lives could make a certain kind of sense, and may find ourselves captured by that vision.<sup>1</sup>*

--William C. Placher

#### **Introduction**

The previous chapter identified a lack of intentional identity formation for men and women leaders in the evangelical church. Because of it, conflicts, confusion, and tensions arise. A lack of identity formation can cause leadership challenges and difficulties especially as men and women work together on mixed-gender staff teams. Chapter 2 will examine what it means to be created in the image of God. The image of God unites men and women leaders around their common humanity and a shared biblical narrative. It is important to the thesis because without a common identity and shared narrative in identity formation, men and women have the potential to remain in identity confusion, contributing to the tensions that can be present on mixed-gender staff teams within the evangelical church.

#### **Genesis And The Image Of God In Humankind**

“Who am I?” is a frequently asked philosophical question of humankind. Whether a personal quest for meaning or the ontological question of origin and ultimate reality, the answer to the question has personal and communal importance. Identity impacts how men and women understand themselves and also how they live their lives in the context

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<sup>1</sup> William C. Placher, *Narratives of a Vulnerable God: Christ, Theology and Scripture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 127.

of the ongoing, unfolding drama of God's story and their personal stories. Ultimately, it is a question that impacts relationships and how men and women live their lives as human beings and as gendered beings.

In the Christian story, human meaning and identity is uniquely linked to God as creator. Humankind is not self-created; that is something God has done. As created beings, God endows men and women with intrinsic value and worth.<sup>2</sup> Human beings are given a unique identity and personal dignity, including a special relationship with God that is different from the rest of the created order.<sup>3</sup> Human identity is derived from the biblical story; in particular, the creation of man and woman. While the intent of this thesis is not to affirm nor negate the evidence for a historical or mythical Adam, my own perspective is congruent with the following statement:

Genesis does not force us to any particular scientific theory about human origins, but it does force us to a conclusion concerning the meaning of humanness, the relationship of humans to other humans, their corporate relationship to God and their relationship to the cosmos.<sup>4</sup>

While the Creation story in Genesis leaves many unanswered questions about human origins, it does reveal the uniqueness of humankind in God's creation. While all creation is described as good, only human beings are given the description of being made in the image of God.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground. So God created man

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<sup>2</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 140.

<sup>3</sup> Phyllis A. Bird, "Genesis 1-3 as a Source for a Contemporary Theology of Sexuality," *Ex Auditu* 3 (1987): 40.

<sup>4</sup> James Hurd, "Anthropology, Theology, and Human Origins," *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* 33, no. 4 (December 1981): 241.

in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.<sup>5</sup>

While historically, the exact meaning of “the image of God” is unclear,<sup>6</sup> it is important to study and discern its meaning, especially in light of identity formation. Discerning its meaning is especially true because, as Grenz claims, being made in God’s image is “the foundation for the task of constructing a Christian conception of the person or the self.”<sup>7</sup>

A study of the image of God begins in Genesis, chapters 1 and 2. Human beings were the final creation act of God; they were created differently from the rest of creation. In previous instances, God created through speaking things into existence; Genesis 1:3 reads, “And God said...” When creating humankind, the process changed. Instead of “And God said...” it reads, “Let us make.”<sup>8</sup> God uses the plural: “Let *us* make man...”<sup>9</sup> to describe the Godhead’s participation in creation. The plurality of the Godhead in creation is also found in John 1:1-3, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.” Christ was, therefore, present in creation. While these verses do not offer clear evidence of the Trinity, it can be noted that God exists in plurality.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Genesis 1:26, 27.

<sup>6</sup> Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 168.

<sup>7</sup> Stanley Grenz, “The Social God and the Relational Self: Toward a Theology of the *Imago Dei* in a Postmodern Context,” *Personal Identity in Theological Perspective*, ed. Richard Lints, Michael S. Horton, and Mark R. Talbot (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2006), 77.

<sup>8</sup> Genesis 1:26

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, (emphasis mine).

<sup>10</sup> Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), 12.

The plurality of God shows God exists in relationship. Jurgen Moltmann, in *God in Creation*, describes the phrase, “Let us make man” as a “resolve” or “self-exhortation” meaning if God participates in self-exhortation, he must exist in relationship.<sup>11</sup> Thomas A. Keiser in his article, “The Divine Plural,” says the plurality of God appears in the creation story at the time when human beings, who are plural, are created. Prior to that, God was referenced as singular. Keiser sees this as an intentional association between God and plurality of human beings.<sup>12</sup> Keiser goes on to say that the unity in plurality of humankind is a reflection of the unity of plurality in the Godhead, or the “community” of God.<sup>13</sup> God, as community, exists in relationship.

Not only does God exist in plurality or relationship, God also created human beings in plurality and for relationship by creating them male and female. While the animals were created male and female, it is not until the creation of man and woman that sexual differentiation is emphasized. Moltmann says the sexual differentiation of men and women reveals their social nature.<sup>14</sup> This distinction is further emphasized when God says, “It is not good for man to be alone.”<sup>15</sup> The aloneness of man was the first “not good” of the created order.

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<sup>11</sup> Jurgen Moltmann, *God in Creation: A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God* (New York, NY: SCM Press, Ltd, 1985), 217.

<sup>12</sup> Thomas A. Keiser, “The Divine Plural: A Literary Contextual Argument for Plurality in the Godhead,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 34, no. 2 (2009): 135.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 137.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.

<sup>15</sup> Genesis 2:18.

Even though humankind was sexually differentiated, God created them for oneness. Scot McKnight in *The Blue Parakeet* writes that humankind was created for oneness, as God exists in oneness. McKnight describes oneness as “union with God and in communion with the self, with one another and with the world around them.”<sup>16</sup> To McKnight, marriage completes creation by restoring oneness to the man and woman by uniting them as “one flesh.”<sup>17</sup> While McKnight sees oneness restored through marriage, Jesus indicates that oneness happens not only through marriage but also through human beings united in Christ. Jesus prays that those who believe in him “may be one as we are one.”<sup>18</sup> Jesus’ prayer demonstrates that differentiation and oneness in relationships are part of the creation story and also part of the biblical story of communal oneness in the family of God.

While God created humankind male and female, the word “man” Genesis 1:26 and 27 does not speak to gender. The English language usage of “man” implies a male gendered being, but the intent of the Hebrew word “the adam” refers to all humanity.<sup>19</sup> The use of the word “the adam” is confirmed in the next verse, which states that God created them “male and female.”<sup>20</sup> McKnight also notes in Genesis 2:23, God chose to “split” *adam* into two, into an *Ish* (man) and *Isha* (woman).<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Scot McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You Read the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 71.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>18</sup> John 17:22.

<sup>19</sup> Hoekema, 12.

<sup>20</sup> Genesis 1:27.

<sup>21</sup> McKnight, 68.



Genesis goes on to describe man and woman as being created “in our image, in our likeness.”<sup>22</sup> The Hebrew phrase does not include the conjunction “and” between the two phrases although later translations do so. The phrases are not two separate descriptions of humankind; instead, they are two phrases used to describe the same thing.<sup>23</sup> These two phrases are found in only three passages: Genesis 1:26, 27, Genesis 5:1-3 (using both image and likeness) and Genesis 9:6 (where only likeness is used).

None of the passages specifically reveal how man and woman resemble or are like God; instead, inferences can be made from the text and historical circumstances surrounding the phrases. In Genesis 1:26 humankind is given dominion over creation, giving evidence to the likelihood that image bearing is related to having dominion over created things, just as God has dominion over all creation. Genesis 1:28 instructs humankind to “be fruitful, increase in number, fill the earth and subdue it.” In doing so, men and women participate with God in the creation process through the act of procreation and as co-creators through their dominion over creation. Andy Crouch says human beings are given the task of “culture making.”<sup>24</sup> Crouch connects culture making with what is revealed about God in Genesis 1 – God creates.<sup>25</sup> Being created in God’s image includes the work and tasks they are given to do.

Humankind’s dominion over creation is further revealed in Genesis 2:16-17.

“And the Lord God commanded the man, ‘you are free to eat from any tree in the garden;

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<sup>22</sup> Genesis 1:27.

<sup>23</sup> Hoekema, 13.

<sup>24</sup> Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 102.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 104.

but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die.” The instruction and prohibition given by God shows the first man and woman’s accountability to God.<sup>26</sup> Humankind is afforded dominion, accountability, and the command to populate revealing ways human beings are created in the image of God.

Genesis 1:27 connects God’s image and likeness with maleness and femaleness.

McKnight describes the distinction:

The choice to make *The Adam*...and to split *The Adam* into two, male and female, is profoundly important for understanding the story of the Bible. In brief, the point of Genesis 1-2 is this: God wanted *The Adam* to enjoy what the Trinity had eternally enjoyed and what the Trinity continues to enjoy: perfect communion and mutuality with an equal. ... God wants *The Adam* to be two in order to experience the glories of communion of love and mutuality.<sup>27</sup>

While Moltmann also acknowledges that God is plurality and in relationship within the Godhead, he also says the Godhead is differentiated, revealed in the doctrine of the Trinity. “The one God who is differentiated in himself and is at one with himself then finds his correspondence in a community of human beings, female and male, who unite with one another and are one.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, humankind bears God’s image not only in the call to dominion and accountability but also, through being created male and female, reflecting the image of God in relationship. Claus Westermann notes the creation of woman completes humankind because “God’s creature is humankind only in community.”<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 174.

<sup>27</sup> McKnight, 69.

<sup>28</sup> Moltmann, 218.

<sup>29</sup> Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* (London: SPCK, 1984), 192.

Genesis 2 offers more detail about the creation of woman. Most translations describe the woman as “the helper suitable (for man.)”<sup>30</sup> The English translation of the Hebrew words, *ezer kenegdo*, has been misconstrued over the years describing the woman as man’s helper, made to assist him, rather than an equal partner in fulfilling the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28. The study of *ezer* and its associated word, *kenegdo*, reveals that the word is “often used to describe God and is translated as succorer, rescuer, helper, deliverer, strength and power. The word, *kenegdo*, which modifies *ezer*, means corresponding to or equivalent. When taken together, these words can be translated as ‘a power equal to or corresponding to man.’”<sup>31</sup> Freedman, in his article, “Woman, A Power Equal to Man” says God’s intent was to create a human being with power equal to man so she could be his partner, not a helper.<sup>32</sup> Westermann concurs, saying man was created to need a partner. Mutual support is an essential to being human.<sup>33</sup>

While Genesis 1 and 2 display the wholeness of the created order, the fall of humankind in Genesis 3 disrupts the wholeness. Gunnlauger Jonsson in *The Image of God* says, “the Christian view of man revolves around these two focal points: the image of God and man’s sin.”<sup>34</sup> The image of God in humanity cannot be fully understood without considering the consequences of the fall on the image of God in man. Genesis 3 details the account of the fall and reveals the consequences of humankind’s choices. Sin

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<sup>30</sup> Genesis 2:18.

<sup>31</sup> R. David Freedman, “Woman a Power Equal to Man: Translation of Woman as a ‘Fit Helpmate’ for Man is Questioned,” *Biblical Archeology Review* (January/February, 1983), 57.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 56.

<sup>33</sup> Westermann, 227.

<sup>34</sup> Gunnlaugur A. Jonsson, *The Image of God: Genesis 1:26-28 in a Century of Old Testament Research* Trans. Lorraine Svendsen, Coniectanea Biblica Old Testament Series (Lund: Almqvist and Wiksell, 1988), 3.

disrupts the oneness and wholeness previously experienced in creation; relationships are now broken and distorted. Adam and Eve experienced a broken relationship with God, with themselves (in their own self-concept and awareness), with one another, and with the earth. They experienced shame (Genesis 3:7), they hid from God (Genesis 3:8,9), and they distanced themselves from one another through blaming (Genesis 3:11-13). Not only were relationships disrupted and broken, human beings experienced distance from creation and were removed from the Garden of Eden. Man and woman no longer experienced oneness; instead, they recognized their “otherness,” both with God and each other.<sup>35</sup> The rest of the biblical story is intent on fixing this “otherness” by restoring men and women to oneness with God. The call to oneness is close to the heart of God and is evidenced in Jesus’ prayer that “they shall be one as we are one.”<sup>36</sup>

Other than Genesis 1 and 2, there are only two other passages in the Old Testament that identify humankind as made in the *imago Dei*. Genesis 5:1-3 confirms that both man and woman were created in God’s image. This passage also speaks to the gendered nature of human beings created in God’s image: “...When God created man, he created them in the likeness of God. He created them male and female and blessed them. And when they were created, he called them ‘man’” (Genesis 5:1b-2). The last passage in Genesis that addresses the image of God in humankind is Genesis 9:6, “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed for in the image of God has God made man.” Both passages support the creation narrative of humankind being made in the image of God and reinforce the understanding that fallen humanity remains an image

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<sup>35</sup> McKnight, 72.

<sup>36</sup> John 17:11, 22.

bearer of God, despite sin and brokenness.<sup>37</sup> Sin has tainted but not completely marred the image of God in human beings. In other words,

The Old Testament passages we have looked at so far teach that man[kind] was created in God's image, and still exists in that image. In fact, we ought to say not only that man *has* the image of God but that man *is* the image of God. From the Old Testament standpoint, to be human is to be the image of God.<sup>38</sup>

While this section examined what it means to be made in God's image, the image of God is expanded upon in the New Testament. An ongoing narrative takes shapes within God's full redemptive story. The restoration of the image of God in humanity includes restoring wholeness, unity, and oneness in relationships, including those between men and women.<sup>39</sup>

### **The New Testament And The Image Of God**

The number of passages in the New Testament that refer to the image of God in humankind is limited; there are only two that address the topic directly.<sup>40</sup> James 3:9 reads, "With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men who have been made in God's likeness." The context of this verse is James' discourse on the sins of the tongue. The Greek word usage means, "past action with abiding results."<sup>41</sup> This passage indicates that not only have human beings been made in the image of God, but they still continue to retain or bear that likeness.<sup>42</sup> The other verse is Colossians 3:9-

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<sup>37</sup> Hoekema, 17.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>39</sup> McKnight, 166.

<sup>40</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:4, Colossians 1:5, Hebrews 1:3.

<sup>41</sup> Hoekema, 20.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

10, “Do not lie to each other since you have taken off your old self with its practices and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in the knowledge of the image of the Creator.” Both passages recognize that human beings retain the image of God yet indicate behaviors in relationship that do not reflect the image. Both passages demonstrate the need to be renewed or transformed in order to be more like Christ.

While the passages that refer to humankind bearing the image of God are limited, there is a turn in the story, as Jesus is revealed as the perfect image of God in human form. In 2 Corinthians 4:4 Paul writes, “The God of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.” The Greek term used here is *eikon* and is translated as “image.”<sup>43</sup> Scot McKnight says the Greek word *eikon* is used when translating both the Hebrew word *tselem* (image) in the New Testament and also when translating the Hebrew word *demut* (likeness). The thread of continuity in language usage, connecting the creation story to the New Testament narrative, is evident.<sup>44</sup> Grenz finds the same continuity<sup>45</sup> in Paul’s writing, “For God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”<sup>46</sup>

Paul describes Jesus as the image or *eikon* of God in Colossians 1:15, “He (Jesus) is the image of the invisible God, the first born over all creation.” Grenz holds that in Colossians 1:15-20, Paul clearly ties together the biblical narrative of the creation of

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>44</sup> McKnight, 231.

<sup>45</sup> Lints, 80.

<sup>46</sup> 2 Corinthians 4:6.

humankind with Jesus as the image of God.<sup>47</sup> The writer of Hebrews 1:3 adds, “The Son is the radiance of God’s glory, and the exact representation of his being.” When considering the words of Paul and the writer of Hebrews, Jesus communicated the same message in his discourse with Philip in John 14:8-9:

Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us.” Jesus answered, “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, “Show us the Father?” Don’t you believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father living in me, doing His work.”

Hoekema ties together the passages referring to man as created in God’s image and Jesus, the perfect image bearer of God:

When we reflect on the fact that Christ is the perfect image of God, we see an important relationship between the image of God and the Incarnation. . . . That God could become flesh is the greatest of all mysteries, which will always transcend our finite human understanding. *But, presumably it was only because man had been created in the image of God that the second person of the Trinity could assume human nature.* That Second Person, it would seem, could not have assumed a nature that had no resemblance whatever to God. In other words, the Incarnation confirms the doctrine of the image of God...*we must learn to know what the image of God is by looking at Jesus Christ.*<sup>48</sup>

Understanding Jesus could only be human if his humanness was a reflection of the image of God invites men and women to consider what it means to be conformed to his image. The life and humanity of Jesus reveals the image of God and informs a common identity. The next section examines the theological implications for being made in the image of God. In addition, the ways in which Jesus’ life and relationships reveal the image of God will be more fully explored in Chapter 4.

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<sup>47</sup> Lints, 81.

<sup>48</sup> Hoekema, 22 (emphasis mine).

### Theological Implications Of Being Made In God's Image

At this point, theological consideration is given to being made in God's image. God's image in humankind gains clarity by examining Christ as the perfect image bearer of God. By understanding how Christ perfectly bears the image of God, one can better understand the restoration of the image of God in humankind. The progressive restoration of the image of God in men and women lays the foundation for understanding how men and women are restored in their relationships with one another.

Understanding the historical context provides insight into what it means to be made in the image of God. In ancient biblical cultures, kings of the ancient Near East often left images of themselves in the cities or territories where they could not be present in person.<sup>49</sup> The images were intended to represent and mediate the presence of the one they represented.<sup>50</sup> In turn, men and women represent God and his presence here on earth, similar to an ambassador representing a particular nation to a foreign country.<sup>51</sup> Moltmann describes it in this way: "the image is also inherently a divine 'mode of appearance.' It is a reflection of his glory"<sup>52</sup> Not only is humankind a reflection of God's glory but "God puts himself in a particular relationship to human beings—a relationship in which human beings become his image and his glory on earth."<sup>53</sup> Hoekema describes humankind as mirroring and representing God; they mirror God by being a reflection of God to others.<sup>54</sup> God's intent for humankind is to display the image of God on earth

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<sup>49</sup> Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 174.

<sup>50</sup> Lints, 79.

<sup>51</sup> Hoekema, 67.

<sup>52</sup> Moltmann, 219.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 220.



through their presence as a living representation of the transcendent God in the midst of his creation.

How do human beings reflect and represent God in creation? Do they reflect God's image ontologically, through their being? Or, do they reflect God's image through what they do? Hoekema says it is both since men and women bear the image of God as embodied beings.<sup>55</sup> Grenz adds that the image of God in us is not destroyed by sin. It is what makes us essentially human.<sup>56</sup>

While human beings bear the image of God in their humanity, sin does mar the image of God in humankind. Humankind is in need of redemption and restoration. Therefore, one needs to understand how Christ reveals the image of God and how his life informs the restoration of the image of God in humankind. Hoekema writes, "In Christ...we see clearly what is hidden in Genesis 1: namely, what man as the perfect image of God should be like."<sup>57</sup> Moltmann adds,

The *imago Christi* is an *imago Dei* mediated through Christ ... the Christological bearing of the phrase can also be read into the translation 'to be his image' if this is taken to mean that the human being has been created 'in the direction of' the image of God which Christ is—that this is the whole trend of his designation—so that the creation of human beings is open for the incarnation. ... Christology is understood as the fulfillment of the anthropology, and the anthropology becomes the preparation for the Christology.<sup>58</sup>

The intertwined nature of the *imago Christi* and the *imago Dei* offer continuity to the entire biblical story. Humankind not only bears the image of God but has the perfect

<sup>54</sup> Hoekema, 57.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 69.

<sup>56</sup> Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 169.

<sup>57</sup> Hoekema, 73.

<sup>58</sup> Moltmann, 218.

image of God revealed in Christ. Redemption in Christ provides the means for men and women to be restored more fully in the image of God and to participate in relational oneness as part of the restoration of humankind, fulfilling Christ's prayer that his disciples become one as he and the Father are one.<sup>59</sup>

What does Jesus reveal about what it means for human beings to be restored as image bearers of God? According to Hoekema, Christ perfectly bears the image of God in a three-fold manner: Christ is wholly directed toward God, wholly directed toward his neighbor, and rules over nature.<sup>60</sup> In turn, the restoration of the image of God in human beings includes the restoration of one's relationship with God, with one's neighbor and with creation.<sup>61</sup> Men and women become more fully human as they are restored in these ways. To be restored in the image of God means, as Christ lived and loved in these ways, we will be more like him as we do the same.

Moltmann describes the restoration of the image of God a bit differently. Human beings are involved in three particular relationships: human beings rule over creation as God's *representatives*; human beings are God's *counterpart*, meaning God is in relationship with humankind and humankind is in relationship with God; and human beings are the *appearance* of God's glory on earth, displaying God wherever they are.<sup>62</sup> This differs from Hoekema in that Moltmann gives greater weight to human beings displaying the glory of God on earth. Hoekema is more action oriented and pragmatic whereas Moltmann focuses on ontology or man's being or presence in creation.

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<sup>59</sup> John 17:21.

<sup>60</sup> Hoekema, 74.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, 75-78.

<sup>62</sup> Moltmann, 220, 221 (emphasis mine).

Moltmann confirms this when he says, “what makes the human being God’s image is not his possession of any particular characteristic...it is *his whole existence*.”<sup>63</sup>

While both man and woman reflect God through their individual selves and presence in the world, they also reflect God through their relationships and gender.

Hoekema affirms that humankind’s interrelatedness reflects the image of God. Humans as relational beings reflect the relational nature of the Trinity.<sup>64</sup> Moltmann adds, “The God who can allow his glory to appear at one and the same time in male and female form cannot ... be a merely masculine God ... nor is he neuter. ... The best way to understand God is the later doctrine of the Trinity, which discovers God both in difference and in unity.”<sup>65</sup> Hoekema gives eschatological consideration to gender and the image of God:

In the life to come, therefore, not only shall we continue to image God as men and women together *but we shall then be able to do this perfectly*. We do not know how such fellowship and partnership between men and women will be carried out in a situation where there is no marriage. But we do know this: *only then shall we see what the relationship between men and women can be like in its richest, fullest, and most beautiful sense*.<sup>66</sup>

Relationship and gender are essential to humanity and identity and reveal something of the image of God in humanity.

While the image of God is made known through gendered beings in relationship with one another, it is also revealed through human community. Hoekema asserts the image of God can be seen in its fullest sense through humanity as a whole rather than

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid., 221.

<sup>64</sup> Hoekema, 97.

<sup>65</sup> Moltmann, 223.

<sup>66</sup> Hoekema, 98 (emphasis mine).

through individuals. Grenz states the divine image is only fully present in community.<sup>67</sup>

He further notes,

It is not surprising that ultimately the image of God should focus on community. As the doctrine of the Trinity asserts, through all eternity God is community, namely, the fellowship of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. ... *The creation of humankind in the divine image, therefore, can mean nothing less than that humans express the relational dynamic of the God whose representation we are called to be.* ... Only in fellowship with others can we show forth what God is like, for God is the community of love—the eternal relationship enjoyed by the Father and the Son, which is the Holy Spirit.<sup>68</sup>

Jurgen Moltmann expands on this, stating; “Human beings are *imago trinitatis* and only correspond to the triune God when they are united with one another.”<sup>69</sup>

The communal nature of the image of God is in direct contrast to the individualism present in American culture. While western culture is rooted in “Lone Ranger” individualism where every person strives toward self-sufficiency, humankind’s identity as image bearer of God calls human beings toward relationships in community. Moltmann says humans need to overcome the individualism that flourishes in western culture, especially when understanding the *Imago Dei* from a Trinitarian perspective.<sup>70</sup> Grenz says for the biblical writers, the image of God is a social concept.<sup>71</sup> In fact, being “in Christ” is a communal concept as revealed by Paul’s understanding of the image of God.<sup>72</sup> Genesis 1 and 2 portrays humankind’s identity as best shaped in gendered

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<sup>67</sup> Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 179.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 179 (emphasis mine).

<sup>69</sup> Moltmann, 216.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 268.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 267.

community where men and women share and bear the image of God. God is not masculine or feminine; God is communal and plural. Andy Crouch says maleness and femaleness imply that God's image can only be displayed through human beings who embody both similarities and differences.<sup>73</sup> Bearing the image of God through gendered community provides a stark contrast to the individualism present in western culture.

The image of God in humankind is also an eschatological reality. Grenz links the eschatological nature of the image of God in humankind to the establishment of the church as the earthly expression of the community of God.<sup>74</sup> Paul captures it in the New Testament when he uses the metaphor of the body of Christ to describe the church. Not only is Christ the image of God (as was noted in 2 Corinthians 4:4; Colossians 1:5 and Hebrews 1:3) but as the body of Christ, the church shares in imaging God just as Christ is the image of God. The church does so through an earthly community. The restoration of human community is a present reality for those who are in Christ. Men and women are being transformed into his likeness (2 Corinthians 3:18). Margaret Thrall writes, "assimilation to Christ as the image of God produces a visibly Christ-like character, so that the divine image becomes visible in the believer's manner of life."<sup>75</sup> Being formed in the likeness of Christ not only involves personal sanctification but also the "ethical responsibility to live out that reality in the present."<sup>76</sup> Being restored in the image of God is not only a present reality but also a future one, as men and women are transformed into

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<sup>73</sup> Crouch, 103.

<sup>74</sup> Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 180.

<sup>75</sup> Margaret E. Thrall, "A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Second Epistle to the Corinthians," *International Critical Commentary* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 285.

<sup>76</sup> Lints, 85.

his likeness in the present and fully restored when meeting Jesus face to face. Therefore, restoration of community in the body of Christ is also a present and future reality.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter examined what it means to be made in the image of God. The biblical and theological concept of the image of God unites men and women leaders around a common humanity and a shared biblical narrative. The image of God is individual and communal. Men and women as individuals are created with dignity, value, and worth, reflecting the image of God. Men and woman are also relational and reflect the image of God through their interrelatedness. The plurality or interrelatedness of the Trinity reveals the communal nature of the image of God and informs humankind's identity. Because human beings reflect God through their relationships the way in which human beings reflect God through gendered relationships matters.

The biblical narrative demonstrates that while men and women were created for wholeness and oneness in relationship with God, self, and others, the fall disrupted and alienated relationships between men and women. Redemption not only reconciles men and women to God but also restores *the intent* of the created order, including relationships as men and women. The hope of full restoration of relationships between men and women provides a vision for how men and women can and should live in current times.

The image of God provides a common narrative for identity formation. By understanding and embracing a collective identity as image bearers, the church, beginning with its leaders, can become a place of help, hope, and healing. Men and women can have a common story that unites them ontologically without diminishing their

maleness and femaleness. To further examine this thesis, the next chapter studies the intersection of gender and the image of God and how the interrelatedness of the Trinity reveals the essential nature of identity in gendered community.

## CHAPTER THREE

### GENDER, THE IMAGE OF GOD, AND THE TRINITY

*If we Christians understand the doctrine of the Trinity aright, we will realize that it implies that God is not about power and self-sufficiency and the assertion of authority but about mutuality and equality and love.<sup>1</sup> --William C. Placher*

*The doctrine of the Trinity reaches to the deepest recesses of the soul and helps us know the majesty of God's presence and the mystery of his love. Love is the most authentic mark of the Christian life, and love among humans, or within God, requires community with others and a sharing of the deepest kind.<sup>2</sup> --Robert Wilken*

#### **Introduction**

The previous chapter explored how the image of God informs identity. The biblical and theological concept unites men and women around a common humanity and a shared biblical narrative. As image bearers of God, humankind reflects God as individuals as well as in community as gendered beings in relationship with one another. The plurality or interrelatedness of the Trinity demonstrates the communal aspect of the image of God and its importance to identity. That men and women bear the image of God matters and how men and women image God through gendered community matters. Although sin disrupts relationships, the trajectory of scripture shows the progressive nature of the restoration of the image of God in individual lives and relationships.

Chapter 2 noted that the image is revealed through individual human beings and through relationships. Chapter 3 will study what it means to bear God's image as gendered beings. Since the image of God is revealed through a sexually differentiated

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<sup>1</sup> William C. Placher, *Narratives of a Vulnerable God: Christ, Theology and Scripture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 55.

<sup>2</sup> Robert Wilken, "The Resurrection of Jesus and the Doctrine of the Trinity," *Word and World* 2, no.1 (Winter 1982): 18.



community of men and women, and since the Godhead exists in relationship or Trinity, this chapter will explore the gendered nature of humankind, made in the image of God as Trinity, and how the Trinity informs how men and women relate to one another in community.

### **Gender and the Creation Story**

#### *Gender in Genesis Chapters 1 and 2*

This section returns to Genesis chapters 1-3 examining what the creation story reveals about gender. As was noted in Chapter 2, humankind was created in the image of God and created male and female. Phyllis Bird in her analysis of the creation stories of Genesis 1-3 notes how humankind, as sexual beings, are described in the text. She finds that sexual differentiation is both present and absent in the text. Genesis 1:1–2:4 speaks to the creation order without providing insight into sexual differentiation.<sup>3</sup> Genesis 2:4–3:24 includes the full scope of creation of man and woman and the fall of humankind. In Genesis 2, Bird notes, “Only when the pair appear together on the stage does the divine-human interaction begin.”<sup>4</sup> The story of creation is complete with the creation of man and woman.

While Bird does not describe how gendered beings reflect the image of God, she does say that, “the divine image characterizes humanity as a whole”<sup>5</sup> and that “to be human is to be created in the image of God.”<sup>6</sup> Bearing God’s image is not relegated to

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<sup>3</sup> Phyllis A. Bird, “Genesis 1-3 as a Source for a Contemporary Theology of Sexuality,” *Ex Auditu* 3 (1987): 36.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

just the man or just the woman. Bird does see the image of God reflected through interrelatedness with God and other human beings but makes a distinction between humankind's relationship with God and the relationship between the man and woman. Humankind has a vertical relationship with God; God is Creator and we are created beings. There is a hierarchy (or vertical relationship) between God and human beings. The man and woman have a horizontal relationship. It is a relationship between equals and not a hierarchy where the man has authority over the woman. From Bird's perspective, a "traditional interpretation of Genesis 1 and 2 has imposed the vertical concept of relationship with God on the horizontal concept of sexual differentiation, transforming the hierarchy of order into the hierarchy of sexes."<sup>7</sup>

Bird's distinction is significant, especially when considering how male and female relationships reveal the image of God. For the complementarian, male and female relationships bear the image of God through authority and hierarchy in both marriage and leadership relationships. Ray Anderson in *On Being Human* argues that authority and hierarchy in the relationship between man and woman is ontological, part of what it means to be male or female. He sees sexuality as being "intrinsic to the image of God"<sup>8</sup> and finds gender identity in the hierarchical relationship between men and women based on Christ's subordination to the Father.<sup>9</sup> Alternatively, Bird's analysis makes a distinction between humankind's relationship with God and man and woman's relationship with one another. By making the distinction, Bird argues that men and

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>8</sup> Ray S. Anderson, *On Being Human: Essays in Theological Anthropology* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1982), 109.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 114.

women are peers, and have a different type of relationship than the one between God and humankind.<sup>10</sup> When considering this distinction, Thomas R. Shreiner and The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood support Anderson's understanding while Gilbert Bilezikian and Jurgen Moltmann agree with Bird.<sup>11</sup>

It should be noted that specific gender traits and qualities are not prescribed to men and women in Genesis 1 and 2. While human beings are created male and female, masculine and feminine traits are not described in the text. LaCelle-Peterson writes that masculine and feminine traits are not found in scripture, recognizing that the terms are not even used by the biblical authors.<sup>12</sup> Rachel Hosmer in *Gender and God* acknowledges the words "female" and "male" speak to biological differences, which are physically discernable but not to personality and emotional differences between men and women. Masculinity and femininity are more ambiguous and refer to "spiritual, psychological and emotional qualities associated with each gender. These associations, however, are vague and debatable and tend to differ with ages and culture."<sup>13</sup> Thus, gender specific characteristics associated with masculinity and femininity are absent from the Genesis narrative.

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<sup>10</sup> Bird, 40.

<sup>11</sup> Thomas R. Shreiner in "Praying and Prophesying in the Assemblies: I Corinthians 11:2-16," finds support for his view of the ontological subordination of women in I Corinthians 1:3; The Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, whose board includes Wayne Grudem, and Russell Moore, among others, affirms the hierarchy of creation order as a pre-fall creation mandate and include it in their theological statement found at <https://www.cbmw.org/core-beliefs/> (accessed December 19, 1012).

Gilbert Bilezikian in his article, "Hierarchist and Egalitarian Inculturations," on page 21 affirms Bird by noting no authority structure in the relationship between the man and woman in Genesis chapters 1 and 2. In turn, Jurgen Moltmann sees man and woman as having a common, shared humanity as image bearers of God, and share equal rule over creation (*God in Creation*, 225). All sources are documented in the Bibliography.

<sup>12</sup> Kristina LaCelle-Peterson, *Liberating Tradition: Women's Identity and Vocation in Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 20.

<sup>13</sup> Rachel Hosmer, *Gender and God* (Cambridge, MA: Cowley Publications, 1986), 7.

The creation story in Genesis also shows that men and women bear the image of God as embodied human beings. Lewis Smedes in *Sex for Christians* notes, “the biblical story is not about the creation of a soul that is encumbered by a body; it is about a body that comes alive to God.”<sup>14</sup> Men and women are not solely spiritual selves; they reflect the image of God in their bodies and how they use their bodies in relationship with one another. Having a body allows one to be present to another. Lilian Calles Barger in *Eve’s Revenge* says, “our bodies make us present just as God is present.”<sup>15</sup> As human beings and image bearers, Barger describes men and women as “the embodied breath of God.”<sup>16</sup> Genesis 2 describes embodied relationships primarily through the duality of relationship between the man and the woman, particularly in the marriage relationship. While marriage between a man and woman is the primary relationship revealed in the text, it is not necessarily the ultimate relationship. For Grenz, the intimate bond is “the first step toward the establishment of the broader human community”<sup>17</sup> and our sexuality is the drive to overcome the incompleteness inherent in God’s recognition that it was “not good”<sup>18</sup> for man to be alone. Sexuality is part of humankind’s drive and desire for connectedness and is therefore not solely fulfilled through a physical sexual relationship. Smedes adds that sexuality is part of what it means to bear the image of God, particularly

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<sup>14</sup> Lewis Smedes, *Sex for Christians: The Limits and Liberties of Sexual Living* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1994), 28.

<sup>15</sup> Lilian Calles Barger, *Eve’s Revenge: Women and a Spirituality of the Body* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2003), 130.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.

<sup>17</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 279.

<sup>18</sup> Genesis 2:18.

“the human drive toward intimate connection.”<sup>19</sup> Grenz understands sexuality as encompassing a broader expression of “God’s intention that we find our authentic humanness in relationship.”<sup>20</sup> Sexuality is about bonding and connectedness in intimate community. It expands the understanding of sexuality to include non-sexual, intimate human relationships between men and women.

Grenz’s point finds further evidence when one considers the narratives of Jesus and Paul. Jesus’ call to discipleship means leaving family behind and finding one’s ultimate relationships in the family of God.<sup>21</sup> Jesus also makes mention of the fact that there is no marriage in heaven.<sup>22</sup> Paul adds to this perspective when he writes that it is better not to marry.<sup>23</sup> If marriage were essential to being made in the image of God and the ultimate relationship for displaying the image of God, one would find evidence for it in the biblical narrative. Instead, there is a balance. While Jesus and Paul both speak about marriage, their emphasis is on relationships in the body of Christ with marriage as one of those relationships. The radical nature of discipleship and life in the community of God seem to be given precedence over the marriage relationship. It is through community that humankind most fully displays the image of God.

The creation story also demonstrates that embodied relationships are vulnerable relationships. Prior to Genesis 3, the relationship between man and woman was described

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<sup>19</sup> Smedes, 32-33.

<sup>20</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 280.

<sup>21</sup> Matthew 12:46-48; Luke 11:27,28.

<sup>22</sup> Matthew 22:30; Mark 12:25.

<sup>23</sup> I Corinthians 7:32-38.

as “naked and not ashamed.”<sup>24</sup> Nakedness or vulnerability allowed them to be fully known both by God and fully known by each other. They experienced intimate union with God and with one another. Not only were man and woman present to one another bodily, they were also present emotionally as is evidenced in their lack of shame in each another’s presence. Bilezikian describes it as “a concluding affirmation of the goodness of God’s creation.”<sup>25</sup> Goodness is evident and although they were vulnerable, they experienced freedom in their relationships with God and each other.

### *Gender in Genesis Chapter 3*

Genesis 3 describes the consequences of sin on the relationship between the man and the woman. The tensions and challenges encountered after the fall demonstrate how sin disrupts the oneness and wholeness of creation. Addressing the impact of sin on relationships, Grenz asks, “What is the divine intention that we fail to live out?”<sup>26</sup> For Grenz, sin disrupts one’s ability or intention to live in loving community. Therefore, “sin is ultimately our human failure to live in community with God, each other, and the natural environment.”<sup>27</sup> Not only did sin disrupt the man and woman’s relationship with each other, it also caused significant disruption in community with one another.

Genesis 3 speaks to humankind’s alienation from God and each other. While the relationship between man and woman in Genesis 2:25 was described as one where they were “naked and not ashamed,” sin produced relationships of selfishness, self-protection,

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<sup>24</sup> Genesis 2:25.

<sup>25</sup> Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: What the Bible Says about a Woman’s Place in Church and Family* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985), 36.

<sup>26</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000), 187.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

and shame. In Genesis 3 the man and woman chose to hide (Genesis 3:8, 10) and blame (Genesis 3:12, 13), revealing the brokenness of their relationships. Their relationship is further marred by the judgment and curse. While the woman's desire would be for her husband, the husband would now rule over his wife (Genesis 3:16) and the man would need to work hard as the ground was cursed as a result of his sin (Genesis 3:17-19). The harmony and oneness of Genesis 1 and 2 is now broken as humankind is alienated from God, each other, the earth, and even themselves.

While Hoekema and Grenz both speak to the disruption sin has on relationships, they lack further discussion of how this disruption, particularly between men and women, mars the image of God in the body of Christ and what needs to be done about it. Grenz does state that relationships among human beings became those that exploit and vie for power, lacking in dignity and wholeness.<sup>28</sup> But he does not expand upon the extent of the alienation of men and women and how it impacts the community called the church and its influence in the world.

J. R. Daniel Kirk in *Jesus Have I Loved But Paul?* reveals a bit more about the tension and disruption. He states, "The relationship between man and woman will be disordered by desire and power and the man is implicated in the extension of the curse as it envelops not only living beings but also the very dirt itself (Genesis 3:17-19)."<sup>29</sup> In his narrative approach to biblical theology, Kirk recognizes the tensions of Genesis 3 will continue to drive the rest of the biblical story. How humankind relates to God, to others

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<sup>28</sup> Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 208.

<sup>29</sup> J. R. Daniel Kirk, *Jesus I Have Loved, but Paul?: A Narrative Approach to the Problem of Pauline Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2011), 34-35.

and to earth will provide a constant thread throughout biblical history, resolved only when the Second Adam makes his entrance on the scene.<sup>30</sup>

Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen in *Gender and Grace*, describes the relational brokenness in Genesis 3 by considering how men and women, as gendered beings, exercise dominion on the earth. She writes:

There are two opposite ways we can abuse our God-given exercise of accountable dominion. The first (man’s sin) is to try to exercise dominion without regard for God’s original plan for male/female relationships. But the second—peculiarly female sin—is to use the preservation of those relationships as an excuse not to exercise accountable dominion in the first place. . . . The woman’s analogue to the man’s congenital flaw, in light of Genesis 3:16, is the temptation to avoid taking risks that might upset relationships. It is the temptation to let creational sociability become fallen “social enmeshment.”<sup>31</sup>

Van Leeuwen’s analysis of sin’s disruption of image-bearing community has distinct implication for gendered relationships. While the above quote speaks to power, exploitation, domination, and passivity, what is missing is how the outcome of the fall uniquely shapes the identity of men and women in Christian community.

While it may be true that masculine and feminine traits are not described in Genesis 1 and 2, Genesis 3 seems to challenge the lack of masculine and feminine distinctions. While both the man and woman experience disruption of relationship with God and each other, the judgment is directed toward their gender and sexuality. The relationship between the man and the woman changes in a very specific ways. For the woman, her “desire” will be for her husband and he will rule over her (Genesis 3:16). Bilezekian describes the consequential desire as “an unreciprocated longing for intimacy

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>31</sup> Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, *Gender and Grace* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 46.



with the man.”<sup>32</sup> Domination and hierarchy replace the love and mutuality of their pre-fall relationship.<sup>33</sup> According to Van Leeuwen, the mutuality and interdependence of their relationships does not disappear completely; instead, men will have “a propensity...to let their dominion run wild, to impose it in cavalier and illegitimate ways not only on the earth and on other men but also upon the person who is bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh—upon the helper corresponding to his very self. Legitimate accountable dominion all too easily becomes male domination.”<sup>34</sup> This is not only evident in marriage relationships but also in the manner in which men and women relate to one another in general. The vulnerability and mutuality evident in Genesis 2 changed as a result of sin in Genesis 3.

Of particular note is how Van Leeuwen ties these distinctly gendered consequences of the Fall to how they each uniquely sinned in the Fall. While the man and woman were equally created for what Van Leeuwen terms “sociability and dominion” over the earth, she sees the consequences of their sin being specific to their choice to ignore these two areas of God-given accountability. First, the woman, by disregarding God’s command to not eat of the fruit oversteps her “accountable dominion.” The consequence is that she now struggles with social enmeshment, which hampers her ability to exercise accountable dominion. On the other hand, man, by accepting the fruit, oversteps the “bounds of human social unity.” The consequence of his sin is that his call to dominion is disrupted by inappropriate domination, which influences all of his relationships ever since. While Van Leeuwen describes how each consequence parallels

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<sup>32</sup> Bilezikian, 55.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Van Leeuwen, *Gender and Grace*, 45.

the particular sin choice, she also notes that sin does not obliterate the equal call to sociability and dominion. Man is called to sociability; the woman is called to dominion. Both continue to reflect the image of God in this way. What does happen is their particular sin intentionally and specifically changes the propensities of man and woman after the Fall.<sup>35</sup>

One of the most significant consequences of the Fall on relationships between men and women has been hierarchy. While some in the church have understood hierarchy as normative for relationships between men and women, this view does not coincide with the typical responses to the rest of the curses and judgments. Human beings proactively take initiative to minimize the consequences of the curse in their lives. Whether it is alleviating the pain of childbirth or encouraging technological advances that make work easier, the church has more readily embraced changes that minimize suffering but has been less likely to embrace changes that redeem the consequences of the fall on the relationships between men and women. LaCelle-Peterson suggests rather than accepting the brokenness of relationships between men and women as normative, it is an area where the redemptive work of God needs to be revealed.<sup>36</sup> By taking initiative to explore what it means for men and women to live as restored image bearers of God, men and women can find their full identity in their personal dignity and interrelatedness with one another. The restoration of the relationships between men and women is especially true of mixed-gender leaders in the church as they model the way forward for men and women in the body of Christ.

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<sup>35</sup> Van Leeuwen, 47.

<sup>36</sup> LaCelle-Peterson, 41.

## Gender, Identity, And The Trinity

In the first section, it was noted that humankind bears the image of God as gendered beings. While created male and female, Genesis chapters 1 and 2 does not describe nor ascribe masculine or feminine traits to the man or the woman. What is found is that humankind bears God's image as human beings in relationship to one another. The relationships are embodied and vulnerable as is noted in humankind's ability to be naked and not ashamed. While distinctly masculine and feminine qualities are not described in Genesis 1-3, the outcome of the fall impacts men and women uniquely based on their sex. The curses and judgments, while specific to one's sex, are not prescriptive of relationships; instead, they reveal areas where Christ's redemptive work is needed between men and women. Men and women, while experiencing the consequences of the judgment and curse differently, continue to mutually be in need of redemption in their lives and relationships.

The next section will explore how gender and the interrelatedness of man and woman reveal and reflect the image of God. In particular, the Trinity will be explored in regards to how the three-personed God informs the understanding of humankind's identity as gendered beings made in the image of God. The concept of *perichoresis* and how it informs identity and relationships will be studied. Lastly, consideration will be given to how relationships between men and women are essential to identity formation and the locus for transformation toward wholeness as human beings.

The Trinity is a starting point for understanding the gender of man and woman and their interrelatedness as human beings created in the image of God. Catherine Mowry LaCugna asserts the Trinity is the primary theology whereby one can begin to address

issues of gender, sexism, and patriarchy. Rather than focus on God's omnipotence, omniscience, and other metaphysical properties, which add to these problems, the only option for Christian theology is to be Trinitarian.<sup>37</sup> LaCugna affirms that Trinitarian theology influences the understanding of humanity's interrelatedness and gender because "the central theme of all Trinitarian theology is relationship; God's relationship with us and our relationship with one another ... the doctrine of the Trinity is the most practical of the doctrines."<sup>38</sup> It is practical because it is "the foundation for a theology of the person and a theology of right relationship."<sup>39</sup> Because God is "perfectly personal and relational" and because human beings are created in the image of God, they will be "most like God when [they] live out [their] personhood in a manner that conforms to who God is."<sup>40</sup>

Since men and women are created in the image of God, how does God as Trinity inform humankind's identity? Before addressing this question, it is important to note that while gendered metaphors are used to describe God, ontologically, God is not gendered. Grenz, in particular, notes God is not sexually differentiated but displays qualities that can be considered either masculine or feminine.<sup>41</sup> While some theologians consider the Holy Spirit to be the feminine person of the Trinity, William C. Placher in *Narratives of a Vulnerable God* writes the word for "spirit" is "feminine in Hebrew, neuter in Greek, and

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<sup>37</sup> Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God For Us: The Trinity and the Christian Life* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins Publishers, 1991), 3.

<sup>38</sup> Catherine Mowry LaCugna, "The Practical Trinity," *The Christian Century* 109, no 22 (July 15-22 1992): 679.

<sup>39</sup> LaCugna, "The Practical Trinity," 681.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid*, 682.

<sup>41</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 292.

masculine in Latin.”<sup>42</sup> Grenz acknowledges masculine and feminine characteristics are present within all persons of the Trinity.<sup>43</sup> Volf, in *Exclusion and Embrace* says God is beyond sexual distinction. He writes, “We use masculine and feminine metaphors for God, not because God is male and/or female but because God is personal. There is no other way to speak of a person except in a gendered way.”<sup>44</sup> Volf also notes, “Whether we use masculine and feminine metaphors for God, God models our common humanity, not our gender specificity.”<sup>45</sup> In other words, maleness and femaleness is the container for humanity, which reflects the image of God.

Volf also asserts male and female or masculine and feminine metaphors of God do not offer a construct for a biblically defined manhood or womanhood. In order for masculine and feminine metaphors to provide a coherent construct for masculinity and femininity, one first needs to prove the ontological evidence of gender in the Godhead, which would in turn shape social practices.<sup>46</sup> Since gender is not situated in the Godhead, Volf infers the gendered metaphors for God can only inform how men and women live out their “responsibilities” as mother and father. One can learn what it means to be a good father by observing how God “fathers” humankind; in turn, one can learn what it means to be a good mother by observing how God “mothers” humankind.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> William C. Placher, *Narratives of a Vulnerable God: Christ, Theology and Scripture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 63.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

<sup>44</sup> Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abdingdon Press, 1996), 170.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 172.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 173.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 171.

If gender is not found in the Godhead or Trinity, how can gender as it relates to the identity of image bearer be understood? As was noted in Genesis 2, humankind is created male and female. Bodies reveal sexual differentiation as men and women. Yet, according to Volf, there is fluidity to humankind's masculine and feminine traits. He sees male and female "sexed" bodies as the locus of gendered differences, which are always "socially interpreted, negotiated, and renegotiated."<sup>48</sup> His view coincides with Van Leeuwen's perspective that the "invention and reinvention of gender roles is an expression of our creation-based sense that men and women need each other."<sup>49</sup> Her concern is directed to those situations when gender roles move from helpful functions to "cages in which God never intended for us to be confined."<sup>50</sup>

Theologians differ in their understanding of how the Trinity informs gender and gender roles. As noted previously, Ray Anderson argues the subordination of women is ontological, part of what it means to be male or female. He sees sexuality as being "intrinsic to the image of God"<sup>51</sup> and finds gender identity in the hierarchical relationship between men and women based on Christ's subordination to the Father.<sup>52</sup> Karl Barth, while having a social understanding of the Trinity, also sees women as subordinate to men, rooted in the ontological nature of the Trinity.<sup>53</sup> Catherine LaCugna in "The Practical Trinity" argues a different position:

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 175.

<sup>49</sup> Van Leeuwen, 69.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 70.

<sup>51</sup> Anderson, 109.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, 114.

<sup>53</sup> Volf, 177.

The communion of God and Christ, according to the doctrine of the Trinity, does not permit any kind of subordination, inequality or hierarchy. While every person is unique, no one person is more important than another, no person comes before another. Likewise with the human community. Communion in the Spirit of God means that all persons, while irreducibly unique, exist together as equal partners in Christ.<sup>54</sup>

While theologians differ on how the Trinity informs gendered relationships, they do agree with the premise that the Trinity *does* inform the identity and relationships of men and women. It is this author's premise that men and women image the Trinity not through subordination but through mutuality and equality as human beings.

If the Trinity informs the gendered relationships of men and women, how can it be understood? *Perichoresis* offers a conceptual understanding of how men and women reflect the image of God in mutuality. The theological concept originated with John of Damascus and is described by Volf as the "divine mutual indwelling that results from self-giving."<sup>55</sup> Grenz describes *perichoresis* as "the personal indwelling of each person in the other two"<sup>56</sup> noting this description allows for masculine and feminine characteristics to be present within all persons of the Trinity.<sup>57</sup> Moltmann describes *perichoresis* more fully, and writes, "by virtue of their eternal love, the divine persons exist so intimately with one another, for one another and in one another that they constitute themselves in their unique, incomparable, and complete unity."<sup>58</sup> Molly Truman Marshall in her article, "Participating in the Life of God: A Trinitarian Pneumatology," says *perichoresis* offers a

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<sup>54</sup> LaCugna, "The Practical Trinity," 682.

<sup>55</sup> Volf, 181.

<sup>56</sup> Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self*, 292.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 293.

<sup>58</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *Rediscovering the Triune God: The Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 2004), 81, quoting Jurgen Moltmann, *History and the Triune God: Contributions to Trinitarian Theology*, trans. John Bowden (New York: Crossroad, 1992), 86.

visual image of the “dancing, self-giving, outward flowing of the Trinitarian life of God,”<sup>59</sup> inviting the participation of all creation. She adds, “*Perichoresis* depicts a relationship of mutuality in which persons draw their identity from being related to others.” The Trinity is both self-giving and reciprocal. Marshall challenges her reader to consider that the divine dance, which is life giving, may include human beings, as partners in the dance.<sup>60</sup>

If the concept of *perichoresis* informs an understanding of the interrelatedness of the Trinity, how then does it inform relationships and identity for men and women? Volf says the divine or self-giving love inherent in the Trinity is the same love men and women are called to demonstrate in relationship with one another.<sup>61</sup> He defines self-giving love as one that “abandons self-absorption by moving toward the other in order to ‘nourish’ and ‘tenderly care.’” This love is found in Paul’s instruction for how husbands are to love their wives in Ephesians 5. Self-giving is also described as the “opening of the self for the other, letting the other find space in the self ... (and in doing so) seeking to make the other blossom.”<sup>62</sup> Through “making space” for another, men and women grow together in love. This happens without losing one’s “self.” Individuals remain distinctly differentiated as men and women, the same as the “persons” within the Trinity, even while offering themselves in self-giving love, enhancing or “glorifying” the life of the other.<sup>63</sup> Gender roles are not of issue when understanding the relationship between men

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<sup>59</sup> Molly Truman Marshall, “Participating in the Life of God: A Trinitarian Pneumatology,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 30, no 2 (Sum 2003): 144.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.



and women in this way. Instead, it is how men and women choose to be present to one another in love.

Volf's point finds further evidence in Jesus' call to love one another. One way Jesus illustrates the extent of his love is by washing his disciples' feet.<sup>64</sup> The self-giving love of the Trinity gives deeper understanding to this example of Jesus' love. Jesus equalizes relationships between servant and master, in "no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them."<sup>65</sup> Throughout John 13-17, Jesus interweaves dialogue about his relationship with the Father throughout his dialogue of love for his disciples and calls them to love one another. The Comforter is promised as one who will "live in them"<sup>66</sup> and Jesus and the Father will come and make their home with those who love God.<sup>67</sup> The self-giving love of God continues in the gift of the Comforter indwelling them, just as the self-giving love of God indwells the Godhead. These verses demonstrate that not only are relationships between humankind to be those of love, but God indwells us through the Holy Spirit and empowers us to live these relationships of love with one another. This brings the concept of *perichoresis* full circle. God exists in mutual, self-giving love; he indwells us as human beings, and enables us to live in mutual, self-giving love toward one another. The call to oneness<sup>68</sup> is grounded in the love that is present in the Trinity. Oneness is worked out through loving one another.

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<sup>64</sup> John 13:1-17.

<sup>65</sup> John 13:16-17.

<sup>66</sup> John 14:15-21.

<sup>67</sup> John 14:23.

<sup>68</sup> John 17:21-23.

While *perichoresis* informs an understanding of self-giving relationships among human beings, it does not inform an understanding of masculinity and femininity as expressed through gendered beings. Volf argues that the relationships between the Trinitarian persons serve as the model for how masculinity and femininity should be negotiated in a social process. Rather than reconstructing “manhood” and “womanhood” from the diverse roles of men and women in the biblical story, or identifying “ideals” or a specific model for gender identity in relationships between men and women, he argues men and women “should negotiate their mutual relations and their constructions of femininity and masculinity.” Superimposing specific roles or functions on gender would be more harmful than good as it would “freeze a particular cultural understanding of gender identity and seek to impose it inappropriately in changing situations.”<sup>69</sup>

If constructs of masculinity and femininity are not superimposed from *perichoresis* or the nature of the Trinity, how does Trinitarian formation happen? While Volf does not find masculinity and femininity to be static or uniform across cultures, he does acknowledge that gender differences are a permanent part of our humanity. However, he sees gender identity shaped through interrelatedness. He writes:

We are neither masculine nor feminine from the start; we are made so through relation to the other gender. Men’s identity is not and cannot only be men’s affair, just as women’s identity is not and cannot be only women’s affair. Gender identities are essentially related and *therefore the specific wholeness of each can be achieved only through the relation to the other*, a relation that neither neutralizes nor synthesizes the two, but negotiates the identity of each by readjusting it to the identity of the other.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Volf, 182.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid, 186 (emphasis mine).

Volf finds affirmation for his understanding of gender identity in I Corinthians 11 where Paul instructs, “in the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man nor is man independent of woman. For as a woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.”<sup>71</sup> Volf says a man and woman’s identity is not established in isolation. Gender identities are intertwined with their common humanity and interconnectedness. Wholeness can only happen through the interrelatedness of men and women. Identities both adjust and are established in relationship to one another. He further affirms his perspective by noting there are two descriptions offered in I Corinthians 11:3-12. The first description (verses 3-10) is situated within the patriarchal culture of a time that finds hierarchy in creation and one’s understanding of men and women in relationship. The other description (verses 11-12) is situated in one’s life in Christ. Men and women are described “in the Lord” and dependent upon one another, minimizing the hierarchy of the previous verses, yet acknowledges their different “sexed” bodies make them interdependent upon one another.<sup>72</sup> While some may use these same verses to argue for the subordination of woman to man, Volf interprets them otherwise.<sup>73</sup>

While Volf connects the doctrine of the Trinity to the interrelatedness of man and woman, not all scholars follow his line of reasoning. Fred Sanders, in his blog post “Trinity and the Gender Debates” sees all attempts to connect the doctrine of the Trinity to gender ideals as stretching the boundaries of interpretation. While he argues against the

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<sup>71</sup> I Corinthians 11:11, 12.

<sup>72</sup> Volf, 186.

<sup>73</sup> Thomas R. Shreiner in his article, “Praying and Prophesying in the Assemblies: I Corinthians 11:2-16,” *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*. 10/1 (2005): 17-21 sees Paul’s teaching as supportive of mutual dignity without displacing the ontological subordination of women. While the issue of head coverings in worship is interpreted as cultural, Paul’s appeal to creation order is not.

connection of the doctrine of the Trinity to gender identity, he does advocate for making the anthropological connection between the image of God in Genesis 1 and 2 and the construct of gender identity. Sanders argues that the doctrine of the Trinity and the doctrine of humankind are not easily interconnected, and says, “Theologians who start with the assumption that the Trinity has an image and that we can identify it in a created structure are constantly running the risk of unchecked projection.”<sup>74</sup>

Sociologist and theologian Elaine Storkey addresses the question of prescribed gender identity in *Origins of Difference* by giving historical and cultural perspective to the question of gender and sexuality. She divides her thoughts into three foci: pre-modern, modern, and postmodern. The pre-modern perspective assumes prescribed gender roles reinforced by tradition<sup>75</sup> and ascribes certain fixed qualities, characteristics, and traits to men and women’s very essence or nature. Called the “essentialist” perspective, it validates traditional gender roles without clear supportive evidence.<sup>76</sup> Even so, it is often the only perspective Christians have for defining and structuring relationships between men and women.<sup>77</sup> The pre-modern perspective, while often embraced by the church, lacks biblical cohesiveness since it is derived more from tradition than the biblical story.

Storkey’s other two foci are modernity and post-modernity, each of which brings changes and challenges to the church. Modernity offers a feminist critique, finding

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<sup>74</sup> Fred Sanders, “The Trinity in Gender Debates,” The Scriptorium, <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/scriptorium/2012/10/the-trinity-in-gender-debates/> (accessed November 7, 2012).

<sup>75</sup> Elaine Storkey, *Origins of Difference: The Gender Debate Revisited* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2001), 25.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 105.

gender identity not solely a product of biology and nature but also a product of one's culture. The movement for equality between men and women arises from this perspective and has mobilized many to respond to injustices toward women, including biblical equality for men and women. In turn, post-modernity challenges the modern perspective of equality especially if equality means women become more like men, and are defined from a male frame of reference.<sup>78</sup> Post-modernity is even more complex, as it discards a shared cultural meta-narrative and accepts a plurality of narratives.<sup>79</sup> The plurality of narratives leads post-modernity to no longer embrace traditionally prescribed gender boundaries.<sup>80</sup>

Storkey recognizes that Christians in the twenty-first century embrace aspects of all three views.<sup>81</sup> She concludes her analysis noting God cares about gender (masculinity and femininity) as much as he cares about sexuality (maleness and femaleness.) While admitting there is not a biblical "essentialist" position that clearly defines gender traits and roles, she does identify four categories that shape a biblical understanding of male-female relationships. These categories are: *differences* (beginning with our physical bodies),<sup>82</sup> *sameness* (equality as human beings and as moral agents), *complementarity* (meaning men and women reciprocate and fulfill something in the other),<sup>83</sup> and *union* (ontologically, they bear the image of God and are "in union" as humankind). Storkey

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<sup>78</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., 125,126.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid, 127.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid, 129.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 130.

believes that to focus solely on any one aspect of gender identity distorts the full scope of the biblical narrative.<sup>84</sup> While helpful, the categories exist in a grey zone that does not firmly root the church and evangelicalism in a perspective that provides the clarity people of faith sometimes prefer. Storkey's model does provide language and categories to ground identity discussion in the biblical narrative, especially when moving beyond traditional gender roles.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter examined what it means to bear God's image as gendered beings. While men and women are created male and female, specific gender traits are not revealed in the Creation narrative. Instead, humanity is revealed through sexually differentiated bodies in relationship to one another. This chapter demonstrates that a case can be made for the interrelatedness of man and woman and is not based on hierarchy, as humankind's relationship with God, but in mutuality and equality as human beings who are peers in relationship to each other. While the man and woman existed in wholeness in Genesis 1 and 2, Genesis chapter 3 reveals how sin disrupted their relationship of mutuality, causing them to focus on self rather than the other. While gender traits and differences were not revealed in Genesis 1 and 2, Genesis 3 shows the consequences of sin being specifically directed to their sexually differentiated bodies. The relationship between man and woman was disrupted, thus opening the door for the misuse of power, domination, and social enmeshment. The disruption is not eschatologically prescriptive for relationships. Instead, it is descriptive of the Fall, and a place where redemption is

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 131.

needed to restore and transform relationships between men and women so their reflection of the image of God may be restored as well.

While both man and woman reflect the image of God, the Trinity informs how identity is shaped through interrelatedness. While gender is not located in the Trinity, how God interrelates within the Trinity speaks to how men and women can relate to one another. The self-giving, mutually indwelling nature of God, as revealed through the concept of *perichoresis*, speaks to identity formation of men and women. Through giving in love for another, men and women not only model the interrelatedness within the Trinity but also the example of Christ for his disciples as is found in John 13-17. Self-giving love offers space for the other and it is in this space that gendered identities are formed. Self-giving love, while modeling the relationship of the Trinity, allows room for cultural expressions of gender, rather than forcing men and women to fit culturally prescribed gender roles. While there is flexibility in gender identity, it does not remove man and woman from embodied, interdependent relationships, which provide the context for identity and gender formation.

In light of the interrelatedness of men and women in identity formation, Chapter 4 explores how Jesus, the perfect image bearer of God relates to both men and women and how his relationship with them shaped their identity and the manner in which men and women relate to one another.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### JESUS AND MALE-FEMALE RELATIONSHIPS

*The (gospel) stories capture through narrative a person's identity.<sup>1</sup>*  
--William C. Placher

*The goal of biblical history is the establishment of a new people among whom outward distinctions no longer govern interpersonal relationships. The New Testament testifies that through Jesus Christ, God has inaugurated just such a people. Consequently, within the company of Jesus' disciples, all believers enjoy an equal status.<sup>2</sup>* --Stanley Grenz

#### Introduction

The previous chapters found the identity of men and women to be rooted in the image of God. The *imago Dei* unites men and women around a shared biblical narrative and a common humanity and is further revealed in individual human beings through their interrelatedness. The doctrine of the Trinity adds to the understanding of how men and women bear the image of God. *Perichoresis* offers a conceptual understanding of how men and women reflect the image of God in mutuality, describing God as one-yet-three who mutually indwell the other in self-giving love. In the same way, human beings are sexually differentiated beings, who give of themselves in love yet remain differentiated as men and women. *Perichoresis* and the doctrine of the Trinity allow for personal and cultural expression of gender in contrast to prescribed gender roles. Gender matters and relationships matter, therefore how men and women live in gendered relationship matters.

Chapter 4 examines how Jesus' life and relationships reveal the progressive restoration of the image of God in humankind. Jesus models the redemptive nature of

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<sup>1</sup> William C. Placher, *Narratives of a Vulnerable God: Christ, Theology and Scripture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 92.

<sup>2</sup> Stanley J. Grenz and Denise Muir Kjesbo, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 96.



relationships between men and women. Jesus' life and teaching inform a leader's understanding of how relationships between men and women can develop. The life of Jesus aligns with the overarching narrative of the biblical story, contributing to an understanding of what it means to be restored as image bearers of God.

### **Jesus' Relationships With Men And Women**

#### *Theological Context*

As noted in Chapter 2, Jesus is the perfect image of God. He is Immanuel, "God with us."<sup>3</sup> When studying the life of Jesus, the focus is often placed on what Jesus said and did rather than his relationships and interactions with men and women. Since God is communal in nature, how the image of God is revealed through Jesus' relationships and, in particular, through his relationships with women needs to be explored. Jesus' relationships guide the development of relationships between men and women leaders. This chapter explores the life of Jesus, his relationships, and how his relationships inform the way men and women relate in the body of Christ.

Before studying Jesus' relationships in the gospel narrative, his life and work needs to be placed in theological context. Jesus came not only to restore humanity's relationship with God; his life, death, and resurrection, initiate the redemption and restoration of life in this world to its original created order. Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom of God and his death purchased the redemption of humankind. Redemption includes the transformation and restoration of humanity's way of being in this world. J. R. Daniel Kirk in *Jesus I Have Loved, But Paul?*, says the work of Jesus includes

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew 1:23

restoring broken social systems.<sup>4</sup> Whatever was wrong with the world, Jesus initiated making it right. In fact, Kirk says:

...the reign of God looks like Jesus rectifying all that is not good with the world that God created “very good.”... As the story unfolds, we see that, yes, forgiveness of sins (individual as well as corporate) is a necessary component of this work. *But we also find that such forgiveness is located within a narrative in which God is, in Christ, making all things new.*<sup>5</sup>

If God in Christ is making all things new, then relationships between men and women are also being made right and made new. For Kirk, the narrative of Jesus is inseparable from the narrative of creation; the trajectory is a “holistically restored cosmos.”<sup>6</sup> Scot McKnight in *The Blue Parakeet* specifically mentions the restoration of relationships between men and women. He writes, “The church has far too often perpetuated the fall (of humankind) as a permanent condition. Perpetuating the fall (fails) to restore creation conditions when it comes to male and female relationships.”<sup>7</sup> Grenz calls the restoration of men and women a restoration of life in community. He suggests it is evidenced in Jesus’ intimate communion with the Father and his intimate community with humankind.<sup>8</sup> The restoration of relationships between men and women is introduced through Christ’s advent.

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<sup>4</sup> J. R. Daniel Kirk, *Jesus I Have Loved, but Paul?: A Narrative Approach to the Problem of Pauline Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2011), 38-39.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 39 (Emphasis mine).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>7</sup> Scot McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You Read the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 165.

<sup>8</sup> Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 284.

*Jesus as Male*

If Jesus is making all things new, how do the relationships in his life reveal God's intent to restore relationships between men and women? The first obvious fact to address is that Jesus came to earth as a male human being. What does the maleness of Jesus reveal about God's intent to restore and make right relationships between men and women?

Jesus' sex may actually be central to his ability to redeem and restore relationships between men and women. Being male allows him to address problems within the patriarchal system. Grenz points out that Jesus' maleness exposes "the radical difference between God's ideal and the orders and structures that characterize human social interaction."<sup>9</sup> Since Jesus lived in the midst of a solidly patriarchal structure (which is the context of most of human history), Jesus' maleness was indispensable to his vocation as teacher and rabbi. Through his maleness, he was able to critique and disrupt the broken power systems of his day. Grenz argues the alternative: What if Jesus had come as a woman? Grenz reasons there would have been no credibility to his teaching or actions if Jesus were a woman. To make the choices he did at that time would not have been unusual or sacrificial for a woman. In Jesus' culture, making sacrificial choices was normal for a woman and not contrary to the prevailing social norms and power norms.<sup>10</sup>

If Jesus had not been male, he would not have been in a position to uproot the systems and structures that kept women bound in patriarchy. His choices would not have exposed the power structures of his day. Grenz writes that Jesus liberated men and

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 290.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

women from bondage to social orders that violated God's intention for human life in community. He also says Genesis chapters 1 and 2 demonstrate that men and women are to live in "supplementarity" rather than hierarchy. Through his life and choices, Jesus began to liberate men from positions of domination and power so that they can truly be male. "As a male, Jesus revealed that the way to life does not lie in acting the part of the strong, dominating, and self-sufficient male. As the new human ... he gave us the Spirit by whose power males can live after the pattern of the Master."<sup>11</sup> In turn, he describes the freedom Jesus offers women:

The male Jesus liberated women as well. ... On their behalf he acted as the paradigm human standing against the male system. He brought them to participate in the new order where sex distinctions no longer determine rank and worth.<sup>12</sup>

Jesus' "maleness" was central to his work of disrupting power systems and establishing relationships across gender and cultural boundaries.

### *Jesus' Relationships with His Disciples*

Jesus lived his daily life in the context of close relationships; one cannot read the gospels without recognizing Jesus as "God with us."<sup>13</sup> This section will study Jesus and his relationships with his disciples, whether male or female. The next section will examine his interactions with women, noting how Jesus, a man, chose to uniquely interact with women in his particular time in history.

Jesus communicated with his followers and disciples using terms that were intimate and familial. He chose to elevate the relationships of those who were not

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 291.

<sup>13</sup> Matthew 1:23.

biological relatives over those who were. In Mark chapter 3, Jesus responded to his family's attempts to "take charge of him" when they thought he was out of his mind.<sup>14</sup> When told that his mother and brothers were looking for him, Jesus responded by saying, "Who are my mother and my brothers?"<sup>15</sup> Jesus answered his own question, saying, "Here are my mother and brothers! Whoever does God's will is my mother, my sister, and my brother."<sup>16</sup>

Jesus redefines the family unit, extending it beyond those related by blood to those who choose to follow him, establishing a new construct – the family of God. Jesus did not critique the structure and function of the family, writes Robert Ellsburg in an article titled, "Who Are My Mother and Brothers?" Instead, Jesus recognized a new family made up of those who follow him in doing God's will.<sup>17</sup> Because followers were often disenfranchised and not readily accepted by the culture around them, including the women, Ellsburg writes that the values of the new family were "inclusiveness, humility and the priority of discipleship."<sup>18</sup>

Jesus indicates relationships in the family of God are of even greater importance than the nuclear family. Jesus' challenge to those who follow him is that anyone who loves father or mother more than him is not worthy of him. Instead, the primary call is discipleship and taking up the cross and following him.<sup>19</sup> Jesus offers similar words in

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<sup>14</sup> Mark 3:21.

<sup>15</sup> Mark 3:31-33.

<sup>16</sup> Mark 3:33-35.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Ellsburg, "Who Are My Mother and Brothers?" *The Living Pulpit* (July-September 1999): 5.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Matthew 10:37, 38.

Luke 14:26 when he says, “Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother and wife and children, and brothers and sisters, and yes, even life itself, cannot be my disciple.” Jesus’ strong words illustrate his relationship with his followers and how relationships in the family of God are centered on doing God’s will.

Jesus gives eschatological understanding to relationships between men and women when saying, “In the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage but are like angles in heaven.”<sup>20</sup> His statement reveals that marriage is for this world only and not the world to come. Lasting relationships in the Kingdom of God are those between brothers and sisters of faith. Jesus supports this when saying that the greatest commandment is to love God and love your neighbor as yourself.<sup>21</sup> The love men and women have for each other as brother and sister or neighbor and friend is the highest and greatest calling. In fact, as the perfect image bearer, Jesus is the living, breathing expression of agape or self-giving love, demonstrating love to the men and women he encounters.<sup>22</sup>

Jesus modeled how to love others, whether a man or a woman. Jesus’ final discourse is dense with language that defines his relationships with his followers. In John chapters 13-17, Jesus identifies himself in the following ways: He is their Lord and Teacher (John 13:13), the one who serves them (John 13:16), their parent as he

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<sup>20</sup> Matthew 22:30.

<sup>21</sup> Mark 12:30-31.

<sup>22</sup> Stanley J. Grenz, *The Social God and Relational Self: A Trinitarian Theology of the Imago Dei* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 314.

affectionately calls them children<sup>23</sup> and orphans (John 13:33; 14:8), and friend (John 15:14). Interjected are the phrases, “be with you” (John 13:33), “be with me” (John 14:3), and “been with me” (15:27). Interestingly, reading forward in the Gospel of John, the word “love” is used thirty-one times while it was only used six times in the previous chapters.<sup>24</sup> The descriptive nouns and phrases reveal Jesus’ relationship with his followers and his personal presence with them throughout his life on earth. Jesus intentionally chose to be with them rather than separate himself from them in life and ministry. McGann in *Journeying with Transcendence* highlights that while this was Jesus’ farewell address, Jesus promised a “deeper realization of his presence (through the Holy Spirit)” demonstrating the care and loving concern of Jesus.<sup>25</sup> The entire discourse reveals the relational nature of God.

Jesus also models leadership by washing his disciples’ feet. His behavior changes the masculine understanding of leadership to one who serves.<sup>26</sup> By washing the disciples’ feet, Jesus models loving humility. His behavior corresponds with Grenz’s understanding that Jesus modeled an alternative way of being male in a culture dominated by patriarchy and hierarchy.<sup>27</sup>

Studies are mixed on whether or not women were present during the foot washing. While none are mentioned directly, McGann indicates the context allows for it,

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<sup>23</sup> Leon Morris, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament: The Gospel According to John, Revised Edition*, Ned B. Stonehouse, F. F. Bruce and Gordon Fee, eds. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1995), 561.

<sup>24</sup> Diarmuid McGann, *Journeying within Transcendence: The Gospel of John through a Jungian Perspective* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1988), 139.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>26</sup> John 13:12-17.

<sup>27</sup> Grenz, *Theology for the Community of God*, 290.

emphasizing the Johannine Gospel does not directly refer to the twelve disciples, but all disciples, making possible the presence of women at the dinner.<sup>28</sup> While their presence remains unclear, this type of behavior would not have been foreign or unfamiliar to the women of his day.<sup>29</sup> Most often the task of foot washing was completed on arrival to someone's home, not at the end of a meal, and was usually done by a slave. Occasionally, it might have been done by a group of disciples out of respect for their rabbi, but never in the reverse as Jesus did.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, while women may or may not have been present at this encounter, they would have been counted among his disciples and would have naturally grasped and been astounded by Jesus' example of service in contrast to the hierarchy of the day. Jesus' disruption of hierarchy modeled godly love through service, not based on gender.

Jesus calls his followers and disciples "friends" in John 15. Jesus illustrates the intimacy of his relationship with his followers through the vine and branches metaphor (John 15:1-11). The metaphor speaks to the disciples' dependence on Jesus for all they do and speaks to how one is connected to Jesus in relationship. Morris parallels the illustration with Paul's description of "the body of Christ" (Romans 12:4,5) and to believers being "in Christ".<sup>31</sup> Not only is a disciple known by his intimate connection with Jesus, the vine (John 15:5), but the relationship is established through Jesus' love for

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<sup>28</sup> McGann, 140.

<sup>29</sup> Dorothy A. Lee, "Presence or Absence? The Question of Women Disciples at the Last Supper," (*Pacifica*, Vol. 6 No. 1, 1993): 6.

<sup>30</sup> McGann, 141.

<sup>31</sup> Morris, 593.



them. Jesus gives further emphasis to his relationship with them when he says the following in John 15:12-15:

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one that this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I no longer call you servants because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.

Jesus links his friendship to following his commands. It could be easily misconstrued that his friendship was conditional. Instead, the passage demonstrates the opposite. Rather than servants who solely do what the master says, Jesus includes his disciples in the intimate nature of his purposes, cloaking his request in the language of love. Jesus calls them to love one another in the same way that he has loved them (John 15:12). Schnackenburg says it is “mutual love,”<sup>32</sup> which is repeated at the end of his discourse (John 15:17). Jesus is not telling his disciples to do what he says; instead, he invites them into intimate proximity and communion with him,<sup>33</sup> telling them what the Father has told him.<sup>34</sup> The word translated “love” in John 15:13-15 is the Greek word *phileo*. While John's gospel uses two words for love, *agape* and *phileo*, the use of *phileo* could be interpreted as “those who are loved.”<sup>35</sup> O'Day in *The New Bible Commentary* goes on to say the English word, “friend,” does not convey the full intent of the word. His use of friend is best understood in light of how he, Jesus, loves.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Rudolf Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1982), 109.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 110.

<sup>34</sup> Morris, 599.

<sup>35</sup> Gail R. O'Day, “The Gospel of John,” *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary: Volume 9, The Gospels of Luke and John*, Leander E. Keck, et. al. eds. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 758.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 758.

Just as Jesus depends upon the Father and remains in the Father's love by following his commands, Jesus asks the same of his disciples. The restoration of the image of God in man happens by being conformed to the image of God through obedience and loving relationship with Jesus. Love and friendship defines Jesus' relationship with his disciples. As will be seen in the next section, the intimate nature of Jesus' friendship was not limited to men; it was also displayed in his relationships with women.

Lastly, Jesus calls his followers to oneness (John 17:21-23, 26). Oneness defines their relationships and mirrors the image of God in man. Schnackenburg writes, "They are to be one as the Father and Jesus are one and they are to be one by being received into this unity."<sup>37</sup> Francis J. Moloney in *Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of John* says oneness makes God known to others.<sup>38</sup> Moloney says Jesus, having made the Father known to them, gives his followers opportunity to share the oneness he experiences with the Father.<sup>39</sup> Schnackenburg says the reciprocal love revealed in John 15 and the unity described in John 17 enhances Jesus' description of oneness.<sup>40</sup>

Unity or oneness corresponds to the oneness of Creation as revealed in Genesis 1 and 2. Scot McKnight in *The Blue Parakeet*, describes the Bible as a story that moves from creation oneness to new creation oneness.<sup>41</sup> McKnight says love, oneness, and

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid, 190.

<sup>38</sup> Francis J. Moloney, *Sacra Pagina: The Gospel of John*, Daniel J. Harrington, ed. (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998), 472.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 473.

<sup>40</sup> Schnackenburg, 191.

<sup>41</sup> Scot McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You Read Your Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publications, 2008), 165.

mutuality are God's original intent for creation. A life of oneness in community "undoes the distortions of the fall" as followers of Jesus "live out the fullness of the (biblical) Story."<sup>42</sup> Jesus describes new creation oneness when he teaches his followers of their need to abide in him, demonstrating the kind of dependence that was present in creation. Intimate dependence on God perpetuates the oneness of creation and new creation. O'Day adds, "The unity which Jesus portrays is not intrinsic to the community itself, but derives from the primal nature of the Father and Son. For the community to be 'one' means that they mirror the mutuality and reciprocity of the Father/Son relationship (cf. 10:38, 14:10, 20)."<sup>43</sup> Jesus invites his followers to experience mutuality, reciprocity, and dependence, as is experienced in the Godhead. Oneness in the body of Christ is connected to the union, mutuality, and reciprocity of the Godhead and is mirrored through relationships in the body of Christ, including those between men and women.

### **Jesus And Women**

Jesus' life was lived in intimate relationships with those who followed him. He was not a distant leader, removed from the daily life of his followers. Jesus' relationships were loving, intimate, and personal. His life and teachings redefined family, changing it from a biological construct alone to include those who are part of his kingdom, the family of God. Life in the family of God mirrors the interrelatedness of life in the Godhead in mutuality, reciprocity, unity, and oneness, in loving community. Jesus' final prayer for

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid, 166.

<sup>43</sup> O'Day, 794 - 795.

his followers speaks of his desire that they are one as he and the Father are one.<sup>44</sup> Life in community images God through close and intimate relationships with one another.

Mutuality, reciprocity, oneness, and love were not solely evident in Jesus' relationships with men; Jesus had close relationships with women also. Jesus' interpersonal relationships with women were risky, bold, and vulnerable. Jesus challenged the cultural systems of his day. Studying Jesus' choices in light of the social order and cultural context of his day allows men and women to understand the intent of his interactions. This offers men and women a model for relationships between men and women in contemporary culture.

*But Jesus Chose Twelve Men?*

Just as the fact that Jesus was male was addressed, the fact that Jesus chose twelve men, not women, as disciples also needs to be addressed. J. R. Daniel Kirk in *Jesus Have I Loved But Paul?* acknowledges this fact and offers the following clarification:

One of the most important dynamics of the Christian narrative is its turning of the economy of the world on its head. Where the world sees power and glory, the gospel proclaims that there is only weaknesses and shame. Conversely, where the world sees only weakness and shame, there the gospel proclaims power and glory. *This is exactly what the twelve men closest to Jesus could never accept.* And in refusing to accept the upside-down nature of the dominion of God, they who were the consummate insiders found themselves, at the end, far from the crucifixion by which Jesus came into his kingdom. They are absent from his paradoxical coronation. Outsiders.<sup>45</sup>

Kirk is quick to acknowledge that while men were chosen as the twelve disciples, it should not be seen as a leadership standard nor should it minimize the role of women in the gospels. By choosing to minimize the role of women or elevate the role of men, one

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<sup>44</sup> John 17:21.

<sup>45</sup> Kirk, 119 (emphasis mine).

ends up like the disciples, ignoring the upside-down nature of the kingdom of God.<sup>46</sup> While Jesus gives prominence to twelve men in his earthly ministry, the men were not given special commendation based on their insider status. Instead, the twelve exposed their desire for greatness and status, and chose to avoid association with Jesus (i.e. Peter) when Jesus needed them the most (John 18:15-18, 25-26). Jesus' teaching highlights service over greatness and sacrifice over prominence (Mark 10:35-41; John 13:1-16). The women and outsiders (non-Jews) received the highest commendation, understanding what it meant to serve and sacrifice.<sup>47</sup>

### *Women in the Gospel Narratives*

Throughout the gospel narratives, Jesus unashamedly associated with women, taking initiative with them and responding on their behalf. Luke's gospel, in particular, emphasizes Jesus' relationship with women. Unlike the other gospels, Luke interjects women into the story of Jesus' life and ministry. While Matthew, Mark, and Luke contain almost twenty stories that include women, Luke also includes fifty references to women, whether designating them by name, or as wives, or by using feminine terminology in his writing. Matthew's gospel is second after Luke and contains only twelve references beyond the twenty stories in common with Luke and Mark. John's gospel has only six references to women beyond what is mutually found in all four gospels.<sup>48</sup> As is noted by this illustration, Luke takes unusual care to include women in his narrative while in the other gospels, women are either absent or left unrecognized.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 120.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 121.

<sup>48</sup> Felix Just, S.J., Ph.D., "Women in the Synoptic Gospels," *Catholic-Resources.org*, [http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Synoptics\\_Women.htm](http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Synoptics_Women.htm) (accessed July 20, 2012).

Luke 8:1-3 names several women among the disciples of Jesus. He writes:

After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

Luke intentionally recognizes women and men among the followers of Jesus. Culpepper says when Luke mentions a man he links the man with a woman as in Zechariah and Elizabeth, Mary and Joseph, and Simeon and Anna. Luke also links the stories of the widow of Zarephath and Naaman the Syrian (Luke 4), the centurion and the widow of Nain (Luke 7) and the shepherd and the woman with the coins (Luke 15).<sup>49</sup> Kirk says the presence of women among Jesus' disciples would have been "extraordinary in the Greco-Roman world."<sup>50</sup> Kristina LaCelle-Peterson in *Liberating Tradition*, affirms Kirk's perspective, adding Jesus inclusion of women in his itinerant role would have been "scandalous to onlookers since adult coeducation was unheard of."<sup>51</sup>

At this point, a bit of historical context is helpful. In first century Jewish culture (and among most Mediterranean cultures of that time) women possessed very little status. Their predominant role was domestic, caring for the home and producing heirs.<sup>52</sup> Because of this, women received little religious instruction.<sup>53</sup> They were relegated to the home due to concerns about sexual purity. Men and women were separated from one other

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<sup>49</sup> R. Allen Culpepper, "The Gospel of Luke," *The New Interpreter's Bible Commentary: Volume 9, The Gospels of Luke and John*, Leander E. Keck, et. al. eds. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1995), 174.

<sup>50</sup> Kirk, 122.

<sup>51</sup> Kristina LaCelle-Peterson, *Liberating Tradition: Women's Identity and Vocation in Christian Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2008), 60.

<sup>52</sup> Grenz, *Women in the Church*, 72.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

publically and privately due to the standards of purity in the Jewish and Greco-Roman culture.<sup>54</sup> Women were considered inferior, less rational, and more sensual than men. In general, there was a low view of women and fear of being seduced by them. It can be easily understood why men, both socially and in conversation, avoided women.<sup>55</sup>

Into this ancient culture Jesus was born and lived. His choice to socialize with women, and allow them to follow him along with the men, reveals how scandalous his choices were. One misses the controversy inherent in his choices when interpreting the circumstances through a western cultural lens. Jesus, by his behavior, clearly demonstrates that “men and woman could intimately relate to one another on more than just a sexual level.”<sup>56</sup> Grenz says Jesus’ behavior also demonstrates that women did not need to find their identity through their relationship with a man. Instead, Grenz writes:

Jesus taught, however, that all persons find their true identity in relationship to God. Consequently, he did not perpetuate the widely held attitude that favored men at the expense of women. He did not view women primarily within their culturally assigned roles of wife and mother. And, he refused to consider women as the source of sexual temptation.<sup>57</sup>

The Gospel of Luke includes the story of Mary and Martha, friends and disciples of Jesus (Luke 10:38-42). While this passage is often used to instruct women to spend time with Jesus rather than always being busy, the story reveals more. It also illustrates Jesus’ defiance of gender roles. While Martha takes on domestic duties customary for the culture of that time, Jesus affirms Mary as disciple, sitting as a learner at Jesus’ feet. LaCelle-Peterson confirms that Jesus not only refuses to endorse a traditional role for

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 72.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 74.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

Mary but that Jesus also affirms her as she takes on the traditionally male role of learning from a rabbi.<sup>58</sup> Culpepper adds further perspective when quoting from rabbinic lore, “Let thy house be a meeting-house for the sages and sit amid the dust of their feet and drink in their words with thirst...[but] talk not much with womankind.”<sup>59</sup> Jesus boldly betrays social norms in order to portray life in the Kingdom of God. LaCelle-Peterson confirms this perspective and says, “By (Jesus) approving of Mary’s activity, Jesus redefines this role as a generically human one: human beings are invited to sit at his feet, to learn from him and to be his disciples. This is the highest calling.”<sup>60</sup> N. T. Wright in *Luke for Everyone*, says positioning herself in this way, Mary indicates she was taking her place as a learner and student, what a person chooses if they want to be a teacher. Mary took her place as one who would teach in the Kingdom of God.<sup>61</sup>

The passage also reveals other intentional choices Jesus made in his friendship with Mary and Martha. He was comfortable in their presence, defying the social customs of his day.<sup>62</sup> Jesus chose to be in their home and have a meal with them. Wright says Jesus is bold, “redrawing the boundaries between men and women,”<sup>63</sup> even calling Jesus a “boundary breaker.”<sup>64</sup> In fact, Wright says the controversy presented in this passage is

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<sup>58</sup> LaCelle-Peterson, 60.

<sup>59</sup> Culpepper, 231 [as found in Herbert Danby, ed. and trans., *The Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 446.]

<sup>60</sup> LaCelle-Peterson, 60.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, 131.

<sup>62</sup> Grenz, 72.

<sup>63</sup> N. T. Wright, *Luke for Everyone* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 130.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 132.



that Mary, by her action of sitting at Jesus' feet, was choosing to *behave like a man*.<sup>65</sup> He writes:

In that culture, as in many parts of the world to this day, houses were divided into male "space" and female "space," and male and female roles were strictly demarcated as well. Mary had crossed an invisible but very important boundary within the house and an equally important boundary within the social world. ... For a woman to settle down comfortably among men was bordering on scandalous...only a shameless woman should behave in such a way.<sup>66</sup>

Aubrey Sampson, in her post entitled, "Women in Ministry: Why I'm Eating with Mary," also describes Mary's choice as "scandalous" as Jesus shifted the identity paradigm for women from that of wife or server to that of disciple and learner.<sup>67</sup>

Viewing Jesus' interactions with women through the cultural mores of his day, his encounters could have been perceived as shocking and even immoral. The scandalous nature of his behavior is also evident when he initiates an encounter with the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4) and engages her in a theological conversation about what it means to worship "in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24), he allows himself to be touched by the woman with an issue of blood, who was also considered unclean (Mark 5:25-34), he allows a sinful woman to anoint him, wetting his feet with her tears, kissing them, and pouring perfume on them (Luke 7:36-50), and when Mary anoints Jesus for burial (John 12:1-8). He also reveals that he is the "resurrection and the life" to Martha at the time of Lazarus' death (John 11:25, 26). Jesus initiated intimate interactions and theological discussion with women despite cultural expectations and potential repercussions.

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<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 130 (emphasis mine).

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Aubrey Sampson, "Women in Ministry: Why I'm Eating with Mary," In.A.Mirror.Dimly.com, entry posted August 3, 2012, <http://inamirrordimly.com/2012/08/03/women-in-ministry-why-im-eating-with-mary/> (accessed September 10, 2012).

Jesus intentionally chose to interact with women despite cultural hindrances. By interpreting his relational choices through the overarching narrative of the restoration of the intended creation order, his choices take on new meaning. His relationships demonstrate the respect and mutuality evident in Genesis 1 and 2. He willingly defied culturally prescribed roles in order to demonstrate that women as well as men can be disciples and followers of him, and also intimately bound to him as friend. He did not sexualize women, degrade them, or use them by making them objects of his desire or purpose. He accepted women as people of value and worth and built relationships with them. Scot McKnight challenges the church to consider what it means for us. He writes:

...(The) story of the Bible's plot leads us to see redemption in Christ as new creation. Both Jesus and Paul see in Genesis 1 and 2 the original design for what Christ's redemption brings to men and women in this world. If there is any place in the world where this mutuality should be restored, it is in the church.<sup>68</sup>

In light of what is demonstrated through Jesus' life and relationships, what should be the nature of relationships between men and women in the church? Jesus' life reveals what relationships between men and women can look like. If Jesus chose close relationships with women in a culture that was even more restrictive than today's evangelical church, how can men and women not do the same today? Jesus' example reveals how men and women leaders can shape a new identity as image bearers of God, loved and befriended by Jesus. Jesus, the perfect image-bearer demonstrates how relationships between men and women can inform a new identity for men and women leaders. While the evangelical church culture limits the leadership of women, it has also limited the depth of relationship between men and women by these same limitations. By

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<sup>68</sup> McKnight, 166.

embracing a common identity as image bearers and the “abiding oneness” modeled by Jesus, the relationships and identity of men and women leaders can change.

### **Conclusion**

Jesus, the perfect image bearer of God, models a new paradigm for men and women leaders. Jesus, who is “God with us” and the one who makes all things new, models a new way forward through how he relates to both women and men. Jesus had close relationships with men and women. He used language which was close and familial, redefining the family beyond those related by blood to those who chose to follow him, providing a new construct—the family of God. Jesus provided eschatological perspective to relationships between men and women by teaching that in the resurrection, men and women will not marry; instead, brother and sister is the foundational relationship between men and women. For those who call themselves disciples, his prayer is that they will be one as he is one with the Father. The oneness of community is to mirror the reciprocity, mutuality, and oneness Jesus experiences with the Father.

Jesus models relationships between men and women. Jesus’ relationships with women demonstrated mutuality, reciprocity and love. Jesus unashamedly associated with women, taking initiative with them and responding on their behalf. While women were not offered status or prominence, Jesus invited women to join him in ministry and included them as his disciples. His relationships with women were close, personal and intimate. Women’s response to Jesus revealed they experienced love and acceptance, and were not objectified by Jesus or treated as sexual objects. Jesus intentionally chose to interact with women despite cultural hindrances. Jesus reveals the importance of

relationship between men and women, offering an example for relationships between men and women in the body of Christ and in ministry leadership.

While Jesus' choices offer freedom and a new identity for men and women, Paul's teaching seems to contradict Jesus' intent. What do Paul's epistles reveal? How does Paul's instruction about distinct roles for men and women, in marriage and the church, correspond to Jesus' seeming disregard for social convention? Chapter 5 will examine the Pauline passages and demonstrate that Paul, too, moves the church forward toward the restoration of the creation intent for the way in which men and women interact in the church and display the image of God through their relationships in the body of Christ.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### PAUL, WOMEN, AND THE GRECO-ROMAN CULTURE

*Paul's letters, to a greater extent even than the ministry of Jesus itself, establish a narrative trajectory of unity through equality.<sup>1</sup>*

*How we understand and articulate the Christian story will always determine how we act.<sup>2</sup>*  
--J. R. Daniel Kirk

#### **Introduction**

Chapter 4 examined Jesus' relationships with those closest to him. Jesus' relationships were not distant but familial, close, and intimate. Men and women were followers of Jesus and were also his friends. Jesus identified himself as Lord, friend, and teacher and also humbled himself as a leader by washing his disciples' feet. His example modeled humility, placing the needs of others over status and reputation. His prayer for his disciples was that they would be one, just as he and the Father are one.

Jesus also had close relationships with women. Women were present among his disciples and among his closest friends. The response of women toward him indicated his care for them was genuine, not as those who were sexual objects or objects of an agenda. Women approached him willingly, whether to be taught as a disciple or to wash his feet with their tears. Jesus loved and accepted them, which compelled women to be with him and follow him. Jesus' encounters with women revealed a trajectory of restoration and redemption, including relationships between men and women. Jesus' demonstrated that women have value and worth, giving them a prominent place in his life and ministry.

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<sup>1</sup> J. R. Daniel Kirk, *Jesus I Have Loved, but Paul?: A Narrative Approach to the Problem of Pauline Christianity* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academics, 2011), 118.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.

Chapter 5 will study the Pauline narrative and Paul's relationships with women. In contrast to Jesus, the Pauline narrative and epistles can be confusing as Paul includes women in ministry yet also seems to communicate the most restrictive and role-defining instructions for women and men in the New Testament. This chapter will examine Paul's interactions with women in ministry and how Paul describes relationships between men and women in light of the Greco-Roman household code. By studying Paul's behavior and the cultural milieu of his day, the reader will see Paul continues Jesus' example of relationships between men and women, communicating a progressive restoration of relationships between men and women in light of the cultural constraints of his day.

### **The Pauline Narrative**

In contrast to Jesus, Paul's life and teaching can be confusing as Paul accepts women in ministry yet also provides the most restrictive and role-defining instructions for women and men in the New Testament. The passages, which indicate separate roles and behavior for men and women, are often understood and applied outside of their historical context. J. R. Daniel Kirk in *Jesus I Have Loved, But Paul?*, says despite these passages, Paul's instruction aligns with Jesus' ongoing redemptive narrative for relationships between men and women. Kirk says men and women's eschatological identity as children of God, and brothers and sisters in Christ, intrudes on the present. Christian community demonstrates the future reality as men and women love each other as co-heirs and brothers and sisters in Christ. When men and women embrace their identity, it influences

behaviors in the present. The calling before men and women, then, is to “prayerfully discern what it might mean to grasp the future and draw it into the present.”<sup>3</sup>

When reading Paul from an eschatological vantage point, the progressive nature of his practical theology is revealed. Paul offered instruction for life and relationships in the midst of the culturally entrenched social and relational patterns of the Greco-Roman world. He guided men and women toward Christ-like behavior within a cultural context, all the while providing an eschatological vision as children of God. Paul provided a glimpse of the ongoing trajectory of equality for men and women in leadership while also making progressive steps toward how men and women were to live within the cultural structures of the day.

### **Women In The Pauline Narrative**

Paul’s epistles say very little of his relationships with women in ministry. In order to explore his ministry relationships with women, one needs to examine the biblical text outside the Pauline epistles while also examining sections of his letters that can often be overlooked. By doing so, the reader will find Paul identifies a variety of women who contribute to ministry and leadership in the church.

Although Paul did not write the Book of Acts, the author, Luke, gives insight into Paul’s ministry relationships with women when he writes of Priscilla and Aquila in chapter 18.<sup>4</sup> The text reveals them as a Jewish couple living in Corinth and are “tentmakers,” having recently left Italy when Claudius ordered all Jews to leave Rome.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Kirk, 49.

<sup>4</sup> Acts 18:1-4; 18-22.

<sup>5</sup> Acts 18:2,3.

Luke's first mention of them is brief but says Priscilla and Aquila are employed together in business. The couple is described by their nationality and their business of tent making. Acts 18 says Aquila and Priscilla accompanied Paul to Syria. All three arrive in Ephesus where Paul leaves Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus while he sailed on to Caesarea.<sup>6</sup>

Paul chooses both for the work of ministry. It is interesting to note how Luke speaks of the couple. The first time the couple is mentioned, Luke uses Aquila's name first. After that, he always uses Priscilla's name first, which indicates she had a more prominent role either as the main leader in the church<sup>7</sup> or the more predominant personality of the two individuals.<sup>8</sup> The same order of names is also found in Romans 16 where Paul describes them as "his fellow workers in Christ Jesus."<sup>9</sup> They are described as "risking their lives for me (Paul). Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them."<sup>10</sup> Lastly, they are mentioned by Paul as "Priscilla and Aquila" when Paul asks Timothy to relay his greetings.<sup>11</sup> The predominant way Priscilla is presented and described provides a contrast to Paul's instruction for women and wives, which will be examined later in this chapter.

Paul's epistles frequently list women in the closing greetings. Romans 16, the lengthiest closing of all of Paul's letters, includes personal greetings to 28 people, 10 of whom are women. Phoebe, Priscilla, Mary, Junias, Tryphena and Tryphosa, Persis,

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<sup>6</sup> Acts 18:18-22.

<sup>7</sup> James D. G. Dunn, *The Acts of the Apostles: Epworth Commentaries* (London: Epworth Press, 1996), 251.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 247.

<sup>9</sup> Romans 16:3.

<sup>10</sup> Romans 16:3.

<sup>11</sup> 2 Timothy 4:19.



Rufus' mother, Julia, and Nersus' sister are all listed in his closing greeting. Personal comments are added after some names. Priscilla is described as one for whom all the churches are grateful;<sup>12</sup> Junia, outstanding among the apostles;<sup>13</sup> Tryphena and Tryphosa work hard in the Lord;<sup>14</sup> and Persis, another woman who worked hard in the Lord.<sup>15</sup> The intentional list of women indicates Paul did not solely partner with men in ministry; he also partnered with women. Two other women are specifically mentioned in Paul's epistles. Philemon opens with a greeting to Apphia, "our sister"<sup>16</sup> and Colossians speaks of Nympha and the church in her house.<sup>17</sup> Clearly, Paul recognized and included women in ministry; their contributions were significant enough to be mentioned by name.

While not naming women directly, Paul writes of men and women in his letter to the Galatians. When writing how those in Christ are no longer under the law, he makes a bold statement. Being baptized into Christ breaks barriers and eliminates divisions that are present among people outside of Christ. Paul writes there is "neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."<sup>18</sup> Paul emphasizes oneness in Christ, not the things that divide. The verses contradict Paul's later division of men and women into specific roles and functions within the church. Therefore, to understand Paul's potential contradictions, one must first examine the cultural context in which Paul lived and wrote.

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<sup>12</sup> Romans 16:3.

<sup>13</sup> Romans 16:7.

<sup>14</sup> Romans 16:12.

<sup>15</sup> Romans 16:13.

<sup>16</sup> Philemon 1,2.

<sup>17</sup> Colossians 4:15.

<sup>18</sup> Galatians 3:28.

## Paul And The Cultural Context

### *Negotiating Hierarchies*

Paul wrote his epistles to a particular people in a particular culture during a particular time. In doing so, he offered practical instruction for following Jesus in the midst of the cultural context. The cultural context influences how one understands Paul's instruction to men and women, and husbands and wives. By gaining insight into the cultural context one can better understand Paul's instruction to women, men, and the church. Paul's writings, while seeming constrictive, actually provided a progressive theology for followers of Jesus in the Greco-Roman world. An understanding of the text and cultural milieu gives insight into the complex task of identity formation in New Testament times, and its application to the current evangelical context.

Within the Greco-Roman culture of Paul's day, everyone functioned in hierarchies. One's position in society dictated his or her function and role. Hierarchical relationships included not only those who were male or female but also slaves and free men. Individuals navigated complex cultural hierarchies, which are reflected in Paul's writings on men, women, slaves, and government officials.<sup>19</sup> Marianne Bjelland Kartzow in her article, "Asking the Other Question: An Intersectional Approach to Galatians 3:28 and the Colossian Household Codes," says Galatians 3:28 and Colossians 3:18-4:1 suggest Paul wrote to navigate complex identity and hierarchy issues in the early church. He not only addressed the church community but also specific types of individuals within the local church, including slaves, men, and women. Kartzow says while Paul addressed

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<sup>19</sup> Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, "'Asking the Other Question': An Intersectional Approach to Galatians 3:28 and the Colossian Household Codes," *Biblical Interpretation* 18 (2010): 368.

specific roles within the culture, the hierarchical functions often changed depending upon the specific cultural context. She writes, “A person could be at the bottom of one hierarchy and the top of another . . . several identity categories were subject to constant renegotiation, and identity construction often seems to be a work in progress.”<sup>20</sup> She says early Christian identity and theology was formed and informed by the hierarchies of the surrounding culture; because of it, community formation had to “negotiate hierarchies.”<sup>21</sup> Paul provided instruction for how men and women could be faithful to Christ and practically follow him in their daily lives.

### *The Greco-Roman Household Codes*

In the Greco-Roman culture, the *Haustafeln*, German for the “household codes”, established hierarchy within families.<sup>22</sup> The cultural context of the household codes helps explain their function. At the time of the New Testament, the Greco-Roman aristocrat’s power was threatened by the social changes of the culture. People previously without power (slaves, foreigners, and women) were experiencing increasing upward mobility due to legal and political changes within the Roman culture.<sup>23</sup> Roman laws expanded the influence of women, and foreign religions were viewed as suspect and subversive of the

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Russ Dudrey, “‘Submit Yourselves to One Another’: A Socio-historical Look at the Household Code of Ephesians 5:15-6:9,” *Restoration Quarterly* 41:1 (1999): 27.

<sup>23</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives: Marriage and Women’s Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), 143.

moral order.<sup>24</sup> The aristocrats were guardians of traditional Roman values. As new religions challenged the values, it threatened how a man led his family.<sup>25</sup>

While Roman policy tolerated foreign religions, such religions were better received when behavior was culturally acceptable.<sup>26</sup> Roman authorities viewed Judaism and Christianity with disdain and hostility; both were winning many converts, including women. Women began turning from their husband's religion to Christianity, causing their conversion to be perceived as a "subversive ploy" instigated by a foreign religion. The conversion of women was also perceived as threat to upper class men, thereby increasing hostility toward Christians.<sup>27</sup> Women's choices introduced new tensions into marriages as women began to ignore traditional roles, threatening men's roles.<sup>28</sup>

Due to religious and social changes, Roman aristocrats wanted to secure their power base, especially within the family unit. The head of household or "benevolent patriarch" ruled over those in his care, a status accepted within the family and society. The head of household viewed his position as "better for everyone if he wielded the power on everyone's behalf."<sup>29</sup> This type of family structure was considered morally correct, even when it included severe discipline of wives who were not submissive. Submissive behavior was deemed appropriate for aristocratic marriages.<sup>30</sup> Satirical writers during the Greco-Roman period wrote that women's increased social power led

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 139.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 142.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 144.

men to suicide, because their male dominance was threatened.<sup>31</sup> Men, in particular, became increasingly dissatisfied with their marriages when wives did not conform to traditionally submissive roles. The men who challenged the traditional roles for men and women risked being accused of political subversion.<sup>32</sup>

The family was the central unit of the Greco-Roman society. Aristotle designated the household code the appropriate design for family relationships. Russ Dudrey in his article, “Submit Yourselves to One Another: A Socio-historical Look at the Household Code of Ephesians 5:15-6:9,” says the household code included the division of family order: husbands and wives, fathers and children, and masters and slaves.<sup>33</sup> To make his point, Dudrey quotes Aristotle’s *Politics*, as saying, “the male is by nature superior, and the female inferior; and the one rules and the other is ruled; this principle of necessity extends to all mankind.”<sup>34</sup>

For Aristotle and the Greco-Roman world, the health and stability of the family depended upon hierarchy and authority structures. To not adhere to hierarchy was detrimental to the household and the order of the state.<sup>35</sup> Within the familial structure, obedience and submission to authority were prized virtues.<sup>36</sup> Subordinate relationships, more than biological relationships, defined the family structure.<sup>37</sup> Household members

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 145.

<sup>33</sup> Dudrey, 28.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>35</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, “The Household Code and Wisdom Mode of Colossians,” *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 74 (1999): 100.

<sup>36</sup> Dudrey, 28.

<sup>37</sup> Keener, 146.

were considered property, whether slaves to masters or women to their husbands or fathers. According to Dudrey, “The patriarchs of ancient households were likely to feel that they *owned* their wives, their children, and their slaves.”<sup>38</sup> Authority, hierarchy, and submission were valued not only in the Greek and Roman cultures but also among those who were Jewish and Christian.<sup>39</sup>

In light of the cultural context and the household codes, Andrew Lincoln states the following:

Setting the household code within this tradition becomes significant for assessing its use within early Christianity, because the tradition reveals that proper household management was regarded as a matter of crucial social and political concern and that any upsetting of the household’s traditional hierarchical order could be considered a potential threat to the order of society. In Graeco-Roman culture, wives, children and slaves were expected to accept the religion of the *paterfamilias*, the male head of the household, and so religious groups that attracted women and slaves were seen as particularly likely to be subversive of societal stability.<sup>40</sup>

When considering the household codes from this perspective, it becomes easy to see how the family structure was an accepted part of the Greco-Roman world and the early church. The context helps one better understand Paul’s teaching to husbands and wives and women in the church. The cultural context allows one to identify Paul’s instruction as progressive and practical rather than limiting and constrictive. His teaching is descriptive of the culture rather than prescriptive for all cultures and times. Paul offers practical theology for life within a particular cultural context rather than prescribing how relationships function no matter the cultural context. Through his writing and teaching,

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>40</sup> Lincoln, “The Household Code and Wisdom Mode of Colossians,” 101.

Paul responded to accusations from those outside the faith and taught men and women how to follow Jesus within the structure of the household codes.<sup>41</sup>

### **Paul's Teaching On Household Codes**

Paul's teaching on household codes is located in Colossians 3:18-4:1 and Ephesians 5:18-6:9. These passages demonstrate that Paul embraced the structure of the Greco-Roman household codes. He also offered a practical theology that guided disciples in their own unique embrace of these codes.

#### *Colossians 3:18 – 4:1*

Colossians 3:18-4:1 is the earliest biblical text that instructs women, children, and slaves to submit to men, fathers, and masters.<sup>42</sup> It affirms the construct of the household code and acknowledges its hierarchy. Each role within the household code is offered instruction based on how the role stands in relationship to another individual or group.<sup>43</sup> In particular, wives are asked to submit to their husbands; husbands are to love their wives and not be harsh with them; children are to obey their parents; and slaves are to obey their earthly masters.<sup>44</sup> What is unique about Paul's instruction is that it addresses each individual as his or her own moral agent; each is responsible for how he or she conducts him or herself before the Lord.<sup>45</sup> This instruction is in direct contrast to the

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Angela Standhartinger, "The Origin and the Intention of the Household Code in the Letter to the Colossians," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* (79:2000), 117.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>44</sup> Colossians 3:8-22.

<sup>45</sup> Andrew T. Lincoln, "The Letter to the Colossians," *The New Interpreter's Bible*, Vol. 11, Leander E. Keck, et. al. eds. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2000), 654.

prevailing household code where instruction was given solely to husbands. Rather than being told to rule their wives, husbands are instead instructed to love their wives and not be harsh with them<sup>46</sup> and fathers are asked to not embitter their children, thus not discouraging them.<sup>47</sup> Paul's instruction is in contrast to the Greco-Roman discussion of household management where the verb "love" never occurs when instructing husbands in their household duties.<sup>48</sup>

Paul's instruction on the household code allowed disciples to demonstrate the intent of Christianity was not to threaten society or "undermine the ethics holding Roman society together."<sup>49</sup> Instead, disciples chose to honor the household code while modifying what it meant to live within its parameters.<sup>50</sup> Lincoln says Paul may also have wanted to encourage wise behavior. The early church needed to use wisdom in response to potential outside threats. Lincoln affirms taking on the duties of the household code, albeit from a new theological perspective. This would have been seen as wise conduct.<sup>51</sup>

#### *Ephesians 5:18 – 6:9*

Ephesians 5:18-6:9 expands Paul's instruction on how to live within the household code structure. Before Paul provides instruction on the household code, he first addresses all within the body of Christ and calls them to "submit to one another out of

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<sup>46</sup> Colossians 3:19.

<sup>47</sup> Colossians 3:21.

<sup>48</sup> Lincoln, *The New Interpreter's Bible*, 655.

<sup>49</sup> Keener, 155.

<sup>50</sup> Standhartinger, 127.

<sup>51</sup> Lincoln, "The Household Code and Wisdom Mode of Colossians," 104.



reverence for Christ.”<sup>52</sup> Paul’s instruction to those within the body of Christ precedes Paul’s instruction to those in relationship to one another within the context of the household code. Paul instructs men and women to submit to one another.<sup>53</sup> According to Keener, the wife’s submission to her husband becomes an example of the submission of all believers to one another. Paul grounds the wife’s submission within the context of the greater community’s need to submit to one another.<sup>54</sup> Paul further defines submission within the body of Christ and clarifies it within the context of the household codes. Keener writes, “Yes, the wife should submit to her husband; but the husband, following Christ’s example of self-sacrificial service for his wife, also must submit himself to his wife.”<sup>55</sup> Paul is not trying to further subjugate the wife to her husband; instead, his words show that Christianity’s intent is not to challenge the prevailing structures of authority in society, especially in light of potential persecution.<sup>56</sup>

The household code also gives insight into Paul’s use of the word “head” or the Greek word *kephale* when referring to the husband in Ephesians 5:23. Within the household code, the man was already described as the head of the household; therefore, his “headship” was in relation to his role in the hierarchy of the family. While many interpret “head” as “authority,” Storkey in *Origins of Difference* says authority was not one of the original meanings of this word. In Greek, the word *kephale* literally means the body part, “head.” In the Ephesians passage, Paul did not use the word, *exousia*, which

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<sup>52</sup> Ephesians 5:18.

<sup>53</sup> Ephesians 5:21.

<sup>54</sup> Keener, 157-158.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

clearly means “authority.” He did use *exousia* in I Corinthians 7 when describing the marriage sexual relationship as mutual and reciprocal. Here, the husband does not have “authority” over his body but his wife does, and vice versa.<sup>57</sup> Both the cultural context and an alternative word for authority show that *kephale* is less about authority and more about describing the husband’s position within the household code. Paul’s instruction to the “head of household” acknowledges the position of the man in the household hierarchy yet offers a contrast in function compared to the role in the Greco-Roman culture.

While Paul provides instruction that maintains the household codes, his instruction is revolutionary, nonetheless. Paul instructs the Ephesians using the household code but clarifies the differences between Greco-Roman relationships and those who are disciples of Jesus. He carefully demonstrates where Christian values differ from those of the surrounding culture.<sup>58</sup> In Christ, relationships within the household code are transformed. Husbands are not to view their wives as their possessions; instead, they are to love them “as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”<sup>59</sup> What was formerly a relationship of hierarchy, ownership, and authority becomes one of reciprocity and love. Paul’s instruction changes the power structures of the Roman household, which would have been a dramatic change in the Greco-Roman family. Dudrey offers an expanded understanding of the context:

I am convinced that the primary purpose of the household passages of the New Testament is *not* to repress the socially downtrodden, but to transform spiritually all who are in Christ—husbands, fathers, and masters included. This in turn transforms all their relationships. Rather than deconstructing the submission of

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<sup>57</sup> Elaine Storkey, *Origins of Difference: The Gender Debate Revisited* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 103.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 157.

<sup>59</sup> Ephesians 5:25.

Christian wives to their husbands, we should pay renewed attention to the construct of mutual submission and reciprocal self-sacrifice that is the major force of the household codes. My view becomes clear when one reads the texts asking how an audience in the social matrix of the Roman Empire would have heard them. What does Paul say in them that is old and what does he say that is new? What is the same as widely held cultural patterns, and what is different—perhaps startlingly different?<sup>60</sup>

Paul's instruction leads forward, continuing the ongoing redemptive vision Christ gave to his followers. He also gives the church a vision for relationships in contrast to those in the prevailing culture. Instruction that originally seems to condone the ongoing limitation and repression of women instead offers freedom, reciprocity, and mutuality within the prevailing social orders of their day.

### **The Household Code and Identity Formation**

Because the cultural context influences one's ability to understand and apply Scripture, Roy Ciampa in the article, "Terms of Translation: Ideological Challenges for Bible Translators" challenges church leaders to consider how they teach the Bible. He says, "in case after case ... readers of the Bible have shown they expect the function (of the instruction in the text) to be the same even if the original and receptor audiences and contexts are in fact significantly different."<sup>61</sup> In other words, twenty-first century readers will interpret the text to mean the same thing for their current context as those of the first century, despite the cultural differences. Ciampa calls this method of interpretation the "mapping of identities."<sup>62</sup> To attain appropriate identity mapping, the biblical culture needs to be similar in design and function so one can "map" it onto the current culture;

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<sup>60</sup> Dudrey, 40.

<sup>61</sup> Roy E. Ciampa, "Terms of Translation: Ideological Challenges for Bible Translators," *International Journal of Frontier Missiology*, 28:3 (Fall 2011), 142.

<sup>62</sup> Ciampa, 142.

otherwise, the reader can misinterpret the text when applying it in a different cultural context.

Ciampa says the problem is particularly prevalent when biblical texts address husbands and wives or men and women. Since the social construct of husband and wife is present in all cultures, a lack of understanding of biblical cultures means one can interpret the relationships of the biblical texts as paralleling their own current cultural context. By being uninformed of the Greco-Roman world and how marriages were different than their own, men and women apply Paul's instruction to their own similar yet different context. For example, Ciampa says marriages in the Greco-Roman world were not between men and women of similar ages. Instead, fully adult men married adolescent girls. While there are references to well-educated women who are married, they are an exception to the prevailing social order. So, while marriages in the twenty-first century are between peers, most marriages in the time of Christ were between those who were not peers by age or education.<sup>63</sup>

Ciampa also discusses relationships between men and women in biblical times, addressing passages that limit a women's function in the church. He writes:

Normally men and husbands were much better educated and had greater exposure to information and experience outside the household. ... In 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 Paul says women or wives are not allowed to speak in the church meeting (in fact it would be shameful to do so), but should ask their own husbands at home if they have any questions. This latter clause only makes sense in a context where it is safe to assume that a wife's husband is better informed and therefore capable of answering whatever questions the wife might have. Such was the context of the typical Greco-Roman marriage. All of the New Testament statements about how wives and husbands should relate to each other are addressed not to wives and husbands who married peers of similar age and life experience as in modern

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

western cultures, but to wives and husbands within the asymmetrical relationship that was the Greco-Roman marriage.<sup>64</sup>

The challenge for Christians today is to “map an identity” for men and women with full awareness of the cultural context of the Greco-Roman world. Ciampa asks whether or not the New Testament texts addressing husbands and wives are directly transferrable to those outside of the cultural inequities of the Greco-Roman world. If not, how do we deal with these differences so as to aid men and women in their study and interpretation? He raises good questions but does not provide definitive solutions.<sup>65</sup>

Ciampa’s insights, along with an understanding of the Greco-Roman household code, provide insight into other Pauline texts that seem to limit a woman’s participation in the church. I Timothy 2:9-15 instructs women to be silent in the church. Keener does connect this passage to the hierarchy of the household codes<sup>66</sup> but also says Paul could be responding to the false teaching in Ephesus likely being spread through women because they were less educated than men. Paul can then be understood as providing an environment where women can learn so that they could teach at a later time. Interestingly, what is most significant about this passage is that Paul does not assume Timothy understands that this is the normative approach for treatment of women in the church. Keener says if the rule was enforced in all churches, and was universal in nature, it would have been already understood in this particular environment. Therefore, because

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 143.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Keener, 111.

the church needed instruction, one can deduce that the teaching was for a particular reason in Timothy's particular context.<sup>67</sup>

Ciampa gives further insight into the biblical cultural context and offers a culturally relevant application of Paul's teaching in a post for the Whitby Forum.<sup>68</sup>

Ciampa connects the concept of "identity mapping" to his relationship with his own wife.

He writes:

For me to treat my wife as though she were less wise, discerning, mature, knowledgeable or apt to lead than I am would be insulting and a failure to recognize and love her for who she really is. . . . It would be to map the identity of a first-century Greek wife onto her identity and thus treat her not as Christ would have me treat her but as Christ would have an ancient Greco-Roman husband treat his less mature and less knowledgeable wife.

Rather than misapplying rules and structures that are rooted in the Greco Roman household codes, Ciampa says men and women need to treat one another as persons, with unique characteristics and traits, needs and wants. For Ciampa, Jesus' call to love one another needs to shape relationships between men and women.<sup>69</sup>

### **Conclusion**

By understanding Paul and his teaching through the lens of the cultural context, one can see how Paul advances relationships between men and women in the church. Paul practically applies what Christ began as he transformed relationships between men and women. The advance of the narrative reveals that relationships between men and women are mutual, reciprocal and equal, all the while navigating what is appropriate to

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<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>68</sup> The Whitby Forum is a blog hosted by author Carolyn Custis James addressing the unique needs of women in leadership. It can be found at <http://www.whitbyforum.com/>.

<sup>69</sup> Carolyn Custis James, "Identity Mapping," Whitby Forum, entry posted September 11, 2012, <http://www.whitbyforum.com/2012/09/identity-mapping.html> (accessed September 16, 2012).

the cultural context of the Greco-Roman world. Both Jesus and Paul related to women as partners in ministry and as friends, demonstrating the forward movement of the gospel trajectory for women despite the cultural hindrances of their day.

Today's cultural milieu is one where women's equality is a forefront issue in many sociological venues. If the church continues to superimpose the cultural context and restrictions of the first century church onto the twenty-first century church, it minimizes the gospel's impact by adopting a practical theology that is not relevant to twenty-first century western culture. By understanding that Paul continues Jesus' trajectory of restoring relationships between men and women and making all things new, including social systems, one can begin to map a new identity of mutuality, reciprocity and equality for men and women who bear the image of God.

The relational nature of Jesus and Paul as evidenced through both Scripture and history provides the context and precedent for men and women to find their way forward as both friends and partners in ministry and leadership. It helps leaders envision an eschatological future that not only has the potential to change the church but inform and transform the world. The church has the opportunity to "lead forward" as those who shape and model relationships between men and women, demonstrating mutuality, respect, dignity, and love, minimizing the objectification of women and the limitations often inscribed by gender.

The next chapter will examine leadership and organizational culture. Of particular note is how relationships between men and women shape and form organizational culture. In order for men and women to lead well in the church and ministry, ways in which men and women relate to each other in the context of leadership matters. Chapter 6

will consider how the image of God as revealed in the Trinity informs relationships between men and women and influences organizational culture. Men and women have the opportunity to shape organizational culture and gender identity through the relationships they build with one another.



## CHAPTER SIX

### LEADERSHIP, IDENTITY, AND RELATIONSHIPS

*Leaders and audiences traffic in many stories, but the most basic story has to do with issues of identity. And so it is the leader who succeeds in conveying a new version of a given group's story who is likely to be effective.*<sup>1</sup> --Howard Gardner

*A leader is first a storyteller. She tells the story of her foolishness, redemption, reconciliation, and restoration to God and others. She is the canvas that God paints to reveal the beauty of his grace.*<sup>2</sup> --Dan Allender

#### Introduction

In previous chapters, a common narrative for men and women leaders rooted in the image of God was identified. This theological concept unites men and women around their common humanity and a shared biblical narrative. As image bearers of God, men and women reflect God through their individual selves and also through their communal selves as gendered beings in relationship with one another. The plurality or interrelatedness of the Trinity demonstrates the communal aspect of the *imago Dei* and its importance to identity formation. That men and women bear the image of God matters and how men and women image God through gendered community matters. The lives of Jesus and Paul reveal the progressive restoration of the image of God in relationships between men and women. Not only is the restoration of the image of God revealed more fully through transformed individuals, but the image is also revealed through how men and women live their relationships with one another in community and ministry.

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<sup>1</sup> Howard Gardner, *Leading Minds: An Anatomy of Leadership* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2011), 14.

<sup>2</sup> Dan B. Allender, *Leading with a Limp: Turning Your Struggles into Strengths* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2006), 153.

While this thesis can pertain to men and women in all walks of life, the focus here is on men and women leaders and how identity formation influences leadership relationships. This chapter will explore leadership identity and leadership relationships. As image bearers, men and women can carve a new leadership identity and organizational culture by embodying the life they are leading others toward. A common narrative and identity for men and women leaders invites them to live the story they are leading. By leading through intentionally restored relationships with one another, they lead from a place of growing wholeness, thus, imaging God through their relationships.

### **Leadership In The Church**

Historically, pastoral care has been the pastor's primary focus in the local church; in more recent years leadership has become an important emphasis for church growth and staff skills. The designation of leader has expanded the role of the pastor to one that not only shepherds those under his or her care but also one who has skills to lead the congregation through times of growth and change. Most pastors and ministry leaders recognize modeling leadership as an essential component of their ministry responsibilities.<sup>3</sup>

Leadership is defined in different ways. John Maxwell in *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership* writes, "The true measure of leadership is influence, nothing more and nothing less."<sup>4</sup> According to Maxwell, influence need not be charismatic; in fact, when

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<sup>3</sup> David A. Davis writes of this, noting that his identity as a pastor was primarily connected with the ministry of preaching. He spent a sabbatical learning more about what it means to be a leader. <http://www.faithandleadership.com/content/pastor-leader>

<sup>4</sup> John Maxwell, *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership: Follow Them and People Will Follow You* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2007), 11.

addressing the topic of influence, Maxwell's first illustration is Mother Teresa. While unassuming, she influenced many through her organization, Missionaries of Charity.<sup>5</sup> Her example strengthens Maxwell's statement, "True leadership cannot be awarded, appointed or assigned. It comes only through influence and that cannot be mandated."<sup>6</sup>

Others expand the definition. J. Robert Clinton in *The Making of a Leader* writes:

Leadership is a dynamic process in which a man or woman with God-given capacity influences a specific group of God's people toward His purposes for the group.<sup>7</sup>

Clinton recognizes that leadership is influence but spiritual leadership entails specifically leading others in God's purposes. Also, Clinton says spiritual formation is essential to leadership development because one's leadership flows out of who he or she is. For Clinton, leadership and spiritual formation must go hand in hand.

Other leaders connect leadership and relationships. Dan Allender in *Leading with a Limp* says a leader "is moved to influence others to engage a problem or opportunity for good,"<sup>8</sup> but also aligns leadership and maturity, seeing leadership as a call to "help (others) grow into maturity."<sup>9</sup> For Allender, leadership and maturity are relational processes. MaryKate Morse in *Making Room for Leadership* defines leadership as a "mysterious and complex relational process between a leader (or leaders) and a group so

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 11-12.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>7</sup> J. Robert Clinton, *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development* (Colorado Springs, CO: Navpress, 1988), 14.

<sup>8</sup> Allender, 28.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 24.

that everyone pursues a redemptive present and transformational future.”<sup>10</sup> For Morse, true leadership happens “between the lines” in the relational processes of leadership.<sup>11</sup>

For some, leadership is not only *about* relationships; leadership *is*, in fact, relationship. Ron Carucci in *Leadership Divided* writes:

Leadership is not something one does to someone else. Rather, it is something one does *with* someone else ... it is time to stop, no really stop, leadership as a person and engage in the more accurate notion of *leadership as a relationship*.<sup>12</sup>

Carucci indicates relationships are especially significant to young, emerging leaders.

Emerging leaders are, “very comfortable expressing emotion and dealing with the emotions of others.” They also “become suspicious of those who seem emotionally guarded and won’t self disclose.”<sup>13</sup> If this is true, then relationships matter if we are to lead well in the next generation.

Although leadership is relational, power and hierarchy in leadership relationships and structures also influence leadership relationships. James Davison Hunter in *To Change the World*, defines leadership as “a set of practices surrounding the legitimate use of gifts, resources, position, and therefore influence (or relational power),”<sup>14</sup> specifically recognizing that influence and power go hand in hand. While leadership involves relational power, he cautions against its inappropriate use saying it is easy for leaders to

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<sup>10</sup> MaryKate Morse, *Making Room for Leadership: Power, Space, and Influence* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 24.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>12</sup> Ron Carucci, *Leadership Divided: What Emerging Leaders Need and What You Might Be Missing* (San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass, 2006), 15 (emphasis mine).

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>14</sup> James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 255.

use their status and power to exclude others.<sup>15</sup> Instead, leaders are to be “sacrificial and selfless” and offer “power under submission.”<sup>16</sup> Henri Nouwen in his book, *In the Name of Jesus*, speaks to issues of power and recommends mutuality between leaders. Nouwen sees Jesus displaying servant leadership through vulnerability, which invites mutuality and diminishes hierarchy.<sup>17</sup> Morse also connects leadership, power, and relationships. She says all leaders have power; it’s how a leader uses his or her power that matters. Power used well invites others into relationships, rather than consumes others for one’s purposes.<sup>18</sup>

Structures and hierarchy can lead to loneliness in leadership. Allender instructs leaders to intentionally work to overcome loneliness, primarily because leaders need each other.<sup>19</sup> He says the call of the leader is to become more human and becoming human means confessing a need for one another.<sup>20</sup> Leadership teams are meant to need one another. Allender writes:

A leadership team is meant to be a community of friends who suffer and delight in one another. And to the degree there is a refusal to be friends, there will be hiding, game playing, politicizing power, and manipulating the process to achieve invulnerability.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 258.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid, 259. Hunter cites John 13:3-5 and Mark 10:42-45 as illustrations of Jesus giving up his power to serve.

<sup>17</sup> Henri J. M. Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (New York, NY: Crosroad Publishing Co., 1989), 44-45.

<sup>18</sup> Morse, 19.

<sup>19</sup> Allender, 120.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 13.

Leading together creates space for honesty, connection, and the potential to overcome tendencies toward power and manipulation that can erupt when leaders lead alone.

Diminishing hierarchy minimizes the consequences of isolation on a leader's life. Nouwen suggests temptations and struggles with sexual sins become more pronounced with isolation and a lack of vulnerable relationships. By struggling with temptation in isolation, leaders miss building the very relationships that transform their lives and leadership. Nouwen insists most leaders "do not know how to live the truth of the incarnation," and instead live in a world of intellectual truth. Nouwen calls leaders to live "embodied" lives,<sup>22</sup> remaining vulnerable and dependent upon one another.<sup>23</sup> Nouwen recognizes leaders need a safe place to share their pain and struggles with those who do not need them.<sup>24</sup> A community of leaders is one place where leaders can listen to and love one another, pointing each another to God who loves them unconditionally.

Men and women leaders may affirm the need for relationships in leadership, but often do not connect leadership relationships and leadership identity. As men and women who bear the image of God and communicate the restoration of the image to humankind, leaders need to embody the message of redemption in their relationships. If leaders *teach* the story of redemption and restoration for men and women through the narrative of being created as image bearers of God, they need to *live* the story in relationship with one another. Leaders need to embody the story they are leading.

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<sup>22</sup> Nouwen, 47-48 (emphasis mine).

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

## Leadership Identity And Organizational Culture

Since leadership *is* relational and leadership *is* relationship, how do relationships shape an organization? If relationships are part of what it means to be made in the image of God, how do relationships among leaders and subordinates influence leadership identity and organizational culture? This section will explore how leadership relationships shape leadership identity and influence organizational culture. It includes a brief review of several authors and leadership specialists and their insights into leadership and organizational culture.

What is leadership identity? Dr. Abraham Zaleznik, in his *Harvard Review* article, “The Dilemmas of Leadership” defines leadership identity as “knowing who one is and who one is not.” Zaleznik says leadership identity refers to how one’s inner life influences his or her leadership capacity. While Zaleznik focuses on the individual leader’s identity, he does not address leadership relationships in the organization as a component of that identity. His concern is how an individual leader deals with anxiety as an authority in an organization. Zaleznik’s premise is that a leader will not lead others well until he or she clearly understands his or her own internal emotional conflicts.<sup>25</sup> A strong sense of identity prevents a leader from being easily swayed by challenges and conflicts in the work environment. While Zaleznik values identity formation and its influence on one’s work relationships, he falls short of addressing identity formation through leadership relationships.

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<sup>25</sup> Abraham Zaleznik, “The Human Dilemmas of Leadership,” *Harvard Business Review* (July-August, 1963): 54.

Crawford Loritts Jr., in his book *Leadership as an Identity*, seeks to discover what every Christian leader has in common.<sup>26</sup> Loritts found incredible diversity among those God chose as leaders in the biblical story. Despite the diversity of biblical leaders, he identified four consistent qualities in each leader: brokenness, uncommon communion (defined as one's intimate dependence upon God),<sup>27</sup> servanthood, and radical, immediate obedience.<sup>28</sup> While these four traits are integral to leadership identity, each trait is something the individual leader can achieve alone.

Laurence Ackerman in *Leadership is Destiny* connects leadership identity to organizational identity, emphasizing that the two go hand in hand.<sup>29</sup> While Ackerman identifies eight laws of identity, his Law of Relationship connects relationships to leadership identity and reads: "Organizations are inherently relational, and *those relationships are only as strong as the natural alignment between the identities of the participants.*" The credo of this law is, "I need others, and am most productive with those who need me in return."<sup>30</sup> When leadership identity and organizational identity align, productivity in the workplace increases.

S. Alexander Haslam and Stephen D. Reicher in their book, *The New Psychology of Leadership*, define leadership identity as "social identity," which is "a shared sense of us." A positive social identity leads to effective leadership. Haslam and Reicher's theory

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<sup>26</sup> Crawford W. Loritts, Jr., *Leadership as an Identity: The Four Traits of Those Who Wield Lasting Influence* (Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers, 2009), 11.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>29</sup> Laurence D. Ackerman, *Leadership is Destiny: Leadership and the Roots of Value Creation* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2000), 5.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 10 (emphasis mine).



is leadership should be informed by group psychology,<sup>31</sup> or how individuals connect within a group or organization.<sup>32</sup> They found that social identity, not whether a leader likes his or her coworkers, causes them to work well together. Football players on the same team collaborate on the playing field, not because they are friends, but because their behavior is guided by a shared sense of group membership. A shared social identity determines whether or not a group will be cohesive.<sup>33</sup>

Leadership identity and social identity influence organizational culture. In “Culture: The Missing Concept in Organization Studies,” Edgar Schein defines culture as “the set of shared, taken-for-granted implicit assumptions that a group holds and that determines how it perceives, thinks about, and reacts to its various environments.”<sup>34</sup> Paul Aitken in his study, “Walking the Talk: The Nature and Role of Leadership Culture within An Organization,” says leaders, through their values, produce a “distinctive organizational culture.”<sup>35</sup>

Aitken distinguishes between leadership culture and organizational culture. He defines leadership culture as:

That amalgam of primary purpose, critical behaviors and essential personal values, identified and agreed by the leaders as authentic and functional for their distinctive organization culture (whole or part), which the leaders (formal and emergent) *role model* through their everyday communications and actions.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> S. Alexander Haslam and Stephen D. Reicher, *The New Psychology of Leadership: Identity, Influence, and Power* (New York, NY: Psychology Press, 2011), 46.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 58.

<sup>34</sup> Edgar H. Schein, “Culture: The Missing Concept in Organization Studies,” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 41(1996): 236.

<sup>35</sup> Paul Aitken, “Walking the Talk: The Nature and Role of Leadership Culture within An Organisation,” *Journal of General Management* 32 no. 4 (Summer 2007): 17.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-19 (emphasis mine).

For Aitken, leaders create culture by role modeling specific behaviors that shape organizational culture. To be effective, behaviors need to be consistent and authentic; values and behaviors need to align.<sup>37</sup>

In contrast, Aitkin says an “ill-defined” leadership culture offers “a fuzzy and shaky platform for leaders’ culture role modeling,” giving mixed messages and unclear values when shaping organizational culture.<sup>38</sup> When leadership values and behaviors align, they shape leadership culture and provide an integrated ethos within the organizational culture.<sup>39</sup> Aitken concludes, “The role for leaders then is to make explicit the implicit culture through being a *role model*.”<sup>40</sup> For added emphasis, Lory Block, in her article, “The Leadership-Culture Connection: An Exploratory Investigation,” discovered immediate supervisors had the greatest influence on an employee’s perception of organizational culture. Because of this, “cultural leadership is a critical competency requirement for the whole organization in the twenty-first century.”<sup>41</sup>

Alignment between leadership and organizational culture does not happen automatically. Paul Sturm, Denice Hinden, and Paige Teegarden, in their article, “Organizational Culture: It’s in the Walk, Not Just the Talk,” illustrate the discrepancy between leaders and the culture they create, especially when senior staff distance themselves from the behaviors they expect of their employees or team members. Behind

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 19.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 27 (emphasis mine).

<sup>41</sup> Lory Block, “The Leadership-Culture Connection: An Exploratory Investigation,” *Leadership and Organization Development Journal*, 24, no. 6 (2003): 318.

an organization's mission, vision, and values are often the *true* values of an organization, which shape its actual culture. These values are “often unspoken and unseen” and revealed through the stories employees tell, especially if asked what it is like to work within an organization.<sup>42</sup>

Margaret Wheatley in *Leadership and the New Science*, affirms the need for alignment between leaders and organizational culture.<sup>43</sup> For Wheatley, all systems are best understood through the “relationships within those networks.”<sup>44</sup> Through her comparative analysis of leadership and quantum physics, she notes that subatomic particles take shape only as they are in relationship to something else. They are not independent of other particles.<sup>45</sup> All matter is interrelated. According to Wheatley, all creation has “a clear sense of its individual identity within a larger network of relationships that helps shape its identity.”<sup>46</sup>

Wheatley finds that the interrelatedness of all things informs how organizational systems function. Forward thinking businesses are taking notice of the science of organizations and are beginning to design their systems based on the humanity of individuals, and what correlates with their innate desires, shifting attention to employees “deep longings ... for community, meaning, dignity, purpose, and love in (their)

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<sup>42</sup> Paul Sturm, Denise Hinden, and Paige Teegarden, “Organizational Culture: It’s in the Walk, Not Just the Talk” *Nonprofit World* (November/December 2011): 21.

<sup>43</sup> Margaret J. Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1999), xi.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 10 (author’s emphasis).

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

organizational lives.” This includes “the strong emotions of being human” recognizing that feelings and love are important in the workplace.<sup>47</sup>

It is this author’s premise that the distance and misalignment between leadership identity and organizational culture happens within churches and other ministry organizations, just as it does in the business world. When congregations grow, or, when leaders choose to distance themselves from other leaders and subordinates, interpersonal and leadership relationships become distant. As this happens, the culture often does not align with the values the leaders espouse. As Wheatley suggests, organizations need to focus on leaders’ humanity and their relationship needs. The church is a place where leadership identity and cultural alignment can happen; especially since members of the body of Christ all share a common identity as image bearers of God.

While leadership values shape leadership identity, it is the relationships among leaders and between leaders and subordinates that ultimately shape organizational culture. Therefore, the way relationships are formed within an organization matters. Having a common leadership identity adds cohesiveness and connection within an organization. It also provides a common social or leadership identity that unifies leaders within an organization. A common leadership identity, in turn, influences organizational culture.

How do relationships among leaders influence the organizational culture of the church? If leaders mutually align around their common identity as image bearers of God, how does this choice inform their leadership identity and shape organizational culture? The next section will examine how a leader’s identity as image bearer is revealed through

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.,14.

his or her relationships, and how leadership relationships can be nurtured and formed in order to more fully reveal the image of God within the church or ministry organization.

### **Leadership Relationships Between Men And Women**

Since men and women are created in the image of God, and, since the *imago Dei* in humankind is relational and communal, how do relationships between men and women leaders need to change in order to embody a common identity? As was noted in the previous section, leadership is intricately connected to relationships. How leaders relate to one another matters. Relationships not only house the tasks leaders accomplish; they also embody the message leaders convey. Relationships shape leadership identity and organizational culture. Therefore, to grow in wholeness and organizational integrity leadership relationships and organizational culture need to align with the leaders' identity as image bearer of God.

For the purpose of this thesis, "leadership community" is defined as a formal or informal group of men and women leaders who intentionally choose to invest in relationships with one another and grow together through increasing and deepening connection with God and each other. Ruth Haley Barton uses the term, "biblical community," defining it as "a commitment to take the spiritual journey together, to be present (in face-to-face relationship) with each other as we are transformed by an increasing connection with God and each other."<sup>48</sup> Leadership community moves beyond the definition of team, where the predominant focus is on the tasks leaders accomplish.

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<sup>48</sup> Ruth Haley Barton, *Equal to the Task: Men and Women in Partnership* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 24.

Instead, leadership communities accomplish tasks together—arising from their relationships with one another. By focusing on relationships in community, leaders influence leadership identity and organizational culture.

While more ministry leaders are beginning to affirm the need for leadership community, just as many are cautious and hesitant about creating vulnerable and intimate relationships between men and women on mixed-gender leadership teams. Their caution is due to legitimate concerns about sexual misconduct. While sexual misconduct can happen, Nouwen suggests intimacy and vulnerability has the opposite effect and diminishes the sexual temptation leaders fear.<sup>49</sup> Hands and Fehr in *Spiritual Wholeness for Clergy* define intimacy as emotionally honest exchanges between persons; “sharing of one’s insides with another.” They do not equate intimacy with sexual intercourse. They differentiate the two by saying, “Intimacy is primarily an attitude; sex is an act.”<sup>50</sup> Hands and Fehr agree with Nouwen’s assessment that those who do not experience interpersonal intimacy are vulnerable to various kinds of addiction. They assert, “Learning to live in intimacy with others is essential to recovery and a psychologically healthy spirituality.”<sup>51</sup>

A leader’s willingness to share honestly and confess sin and brokenness opens them to the work of the Holy Spirit in their midst.<sup>52</sup> Nouwen calls it a “confessing community.” He compares it to Alcoholics Anonymous, where men and women experience “God’s healing presence in the confessing community of those who dare to

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<sup>49</sup> Nouwen, 49.

<sup>50</sup> Donald R. Hands and Wayne L. Fehr, *Spiritual Wholeness for Clergy: A New Psychology of Intimacy with God, Self, and Others* (New York: The Alban Institute, 1993), 37-38.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, xx.

<sup>52</sup> Nouwen, 48.

search for healing.”<sup>53</sup> While mixed-gender leadership teams may hesitate to be vulnerable, other mixed-gender groups engage in vulnerability as part of their journey of healing and wholeness.

Vulnerability and confession in community is particularly important for ministry leaders who are tempted to misuse their personal and positional power in relationships. Hands and Fehr identify power as a substitute for intimacy, whether it is the power of their personality or the power of position. Interestingly, it is those who rely more on their personal power than their ability to develop interpersonal relationships that are more prone to sexual temptation.<sup>54</sup> Vulnerability and confession can counteract the tendency toward sexual misconduct by counterbalancing one’s use of power with deeper and more vulnerable relationships with others.

Ruth Haley Barton speaks to the need for vulnerability among mixed-gender staff teams. In *Equal to the Task*, she affirms the need for community and writes:

The process of men and women coming into community and partnership is no academic exercise . . . Instead it is a journey of the heart into an unknown, an opening to a transforming power that we have rarely experienced. It is the admission that before men and women can *accomplish* things together we must learn to *be together in love*, in compassion, in truth, in body, in strength, in vulnerability – in God.<sup>55</sup>

Yet, how is this done?

While men and women may be interested in cultivating vulnerable leadership community, church leaders have often created firm boundaries to guard against sexual misconduct and provide a concrete means of assessing whether or not integrity was

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 38-40.

<sup>55</sup> Barton, 15 (author’s emphasis).

maintained. When I was on a church staff team, an “above reproach” policy was implemented limiting behaviors between men and women who work together. The policy included: a man and woman on staff could not have off-site meals or meetings without the presence of another person; doors could not be closed when a man and woman met together, or, if doors were closed, doors with windows had to have the blinds open; and men and women could not discuss anything of a sexual nature unless they were married to each other. While trying to preempt controversy, guard against sin, and, to be quite honest, avoid a lawsuit, the choice to limit behaviors only made relationships between men and women more confusing. Rather than helping men and women authentically navigate the complexity of male-female relationships in the workplace, senior leaders focused their energy on enacting policies that promoted self-protection. If leaders are to embody mutuality as image bearers of God, they need guidance toward healthy relationships, not self-protection and carefully managed behaviors.

Barton agrees with this. In fact, she encourages men and women to deepen their relationships with one another as part of their interdependent leadership journey. She recognizes the church, while having been helpful in many aspects of relational healing, has not provided help for men and women as they navigate leadership relationships. She writes:

I would like to be able to say that the church has offered answers to the pains and questions that men and women experience in relation to each other, but in this area in particular *the church often has contributed to the problem*. Rather than living out God’s ideal of women and men in equal partnership in such a way that our presence in society begins to transform it, we have created elaborate systems, rules and structures that segregate and limit us.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 19 (emphasis mine).



The rules I experienced in my work environment validate her premise. Rather than help men and women navigate the challenges and questions that erupt when working together, the behaviors prescribed by the “above reproach” policy created barriers that distanced rather than guide men and women in how to care for one another’s souls. While policies may offer comfortable boundaries in difficult situations, they also keep leaders from addressing relational difficulties in a way that affords mutual understanding and healing. By not maturing through challenges they encounter, men and women remain less than who God calls them to be.

Those in leadership community can learn to be present to one another in love. Creating a vulnerable leadership community has its challenges. It includes overcoming the perceptions and misperceptions that men and women have of one another. The church’s tendency to segregate men and women has thwarted the ability to develop healthy male-female friendships. Without healthy friendships, men and women can easily be misunderstood. Barton acknowledges that women can fail to speak the truth to men and be prone to using their sexuality in manipulative ways. In turn, men can be prone to being disrespectful as they limit women rather than empowering them to live into their gifts and abilities. Because of these tendencies, men and women can be more guarded, suspicious and defensive.<sup>57</sup> Deepening relationships through leadership community requires skills that many ministry leaders have not cultivated. Openness and vulnerability require relational skills that can navigate the deep waters of intimate leadership community. It means identifying the best means of cultivating health, wholeness, and hope among men and women leaders.

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

### **Embodying The Trinity In Leadership Community**

How can leaders embody in community their common identity as image bearers? How do relationships inform and shape their identity as leaders? It is this author's premise that certain relational characteristics are inherent in the Trinity, which can be developed in relationships between men and women leaders. I have identified four relational qualities of the Trinity that, if intentionally cultivated between men and women leaders, will shape their leadership identity and influence organizational culture. They are: 1) mutuality, 2) self-differentiation, 3) vulnerability, and 4) love. As men and women lead from relationships that exemplify these four qualities, they will more fully reflect the image of God, offering those they lead a concrete, embodied illustration of restored relationships between men and women.

If leaders do not choose to intentionally develop these four relational qualities, they will not be able to guide others toward a new way of being in relationship with one another. Ruth Barton writes, "Only a radical return to community will take men and women beyond sinful patterns of wrongful domination, exclusion, and disrespect to the mutuality and interdependence for which we were created."<sup>58</sup> These four relational qualities will be examined in the following section, and in Chapter 7 the specific application of the above four qualities will be addressed.

#### *Trinitarian Relationships are Mutual*

William C. Placher, in *Narratives of a Vulnerable God* writes, "If we Christians understand the doctrine of the Trinity aright, we will realize that it implies that God is not

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<sup>58</sup> Barton, 24.

about power and self-sufficiency and the assertion of authority but about mutuality and equality and love.”<sup>59</sup> While equality is a term used to describe egalitarian relationships between men and women, mutuality expands the nature of equality. Scot McKnight, in *The Blue Parakeet*, uses equality and mutuality interchangeably but connects mutuality with the “oneness” that was present before the Fall of humankind, and the oneness men and women are to reestablish in Christ.<sup>60</sup> Beyond “equal,” mutuality speaks to the interdependence of men and women in relationship with each another. Not only are men and women equal but they also need one another.

*Perichoresis*, as discussed in Chapter 3, informs an understanding of mutuality. *Perichoresis* is “a relationship of mutuality in which persons draw their identity from being related to others.”<sup>61</sup> This corresponds with Wheatley’s study of quantum physics, where an organism’s individual identity fits within the larger network of relationships.<sup>62</sup> Placher describes *perichoresis* and the Trinity as a “community of equals, united in mutual love.”<sup>63</sup>

Mutuality reveals that men and women need one another in ministry and leadership. Mixed-gender leadership relationships provide a context for mutual interdependence, allowing men and women to fully exhibit the image of God to one another and those they lead. Claus Westerman affirms mutuality as “an essential part of

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<sup>59</sup> William C. Placher, *Narratives of a Vulnerable God: Christ, Theology and Scripture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994), 55.

<sup>60</sup> Scot McKnight, *The Blue Parakeet: Rethinking How You Read the Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zonderan Publications, 2008), 161.

<sup>61</sup> Molly Truman Marshall, “Participating in the Life of God: A Trinitarian Pneumatology”, *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 30, no. 2 (Sum 2003): 145.

<sup>62</sup> Wheatley, 20.

<sup>63</sup> Placher, 73.

being human.”<sup>64</sup> Placher says men and women are not fully human outside of intentional *and* mutual community with one another.<sup>65</sup> At a bare minimum, mutuality means leaders are to demonstrate their need for one another.

Mutuality is also exhibited through mutual self-giving. In Chapter 3, mutual self-giving was described as losing one’s self and finding one’s self in community.<sup>66</sup> Self-forgetfulness happens when, as part of a team or community, care for one another transcends the individual’s care for him or herself. According to Placher, self-forgetfulness allows a person to become more fully themselves by relinquishing self-sufficiency, and embracing mutuality.<sup>67</sup> Mutuality also corresponds to Paul’s instruction to men and women to be mutually submissive to one another.<sup>68</sup> The self-giving nature of love evidences itself in men and women when they choose to submit to one another in love, which stands in contrast to submission because of power, position, or hierarchy.

Mutuality closely corresponds to Jesus’ prayer for oneness among his disciples. In Chapter 2, McKnight captures this concept when he speaks of the oneness of the Trinity and the oneness that can be experienced between human beings, noting how God wanted Adam to enjoy what God has experienced all along—“the glories of communion of love and mutuality.”<sup>69</sup> Mutuality and oneness in relationships between men and women also provides the context for unity in diversity. Placher describes it succinctly:

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<sup>64</sup> Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary* (London: SPCK, 1984), 227.

<sup>65</sup> Placher, 69 (emphasis mine.)

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 70.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>68</sup> Ephesians 5:21

<sup>69</sup> McKnight, 69.

We all live in human communities ... full of jockeying for position and all kinds of competitiveness. Even within ourselves, we often find the part of us most committed to career at war with the part of us most interested in family, and so on. The triune God ... is not like that. In this unity in diversity mutual love and deference wonderfully yield mutual glorification.<sup>70</sup>

Cultivating mutuality and oneness minimizes the tendency toward self-sufficiency.

Mutuality creates interdependence and affirms the need for one another. Through mutuality, leaders begin to model the oneness Jesus intended for his disciples.

### *Trinitarian Relationships are Well-Differentiated*

Relationships between men and women are meant to be mutual and interdependent but not enmeshed. Just as self-differentiation is evident in the persons of the Trinity, self-differentiation is important in relationships between men and women leaders. Men and women bring their gendered selves to community. Gender is not something to be diminished or lost. In fact, oneness happens without the loss of gender and personal differences. Self-differentiation is a relational quality that allows oneness to happen despite diversity.

Emotionally healthy relationships between men and women leaders require self-differentiation. Edwin H. Friedman in *A Failure of Nerve* defines self-differentiation as one's ability to be "together yet separate." He writes:

A well-differentiated leader can be separate while still remaining connected, and therefore can maintain a modifying, non-anxious, and sometimes challenging presence ... someone who can manage his or her own reactivity to the automatic reactivity of others, and therefore be able to take stands at the risk of displeasing.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> Placher, 65.

<sup>71</sup> Edwin H. Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix* (New York, NY: Seabury Press, 2007), 14.

Friedman's studies find effective leadership is related to how a leader's *presence* is able to preserve an organization or society's integrity.<sup>72</sup>

When a leader is not well differentiated, he or she is not able to offer one's presence to others in mindful and attentive ways. Most leaders struggle with self-differentiation because they have not taken the time to "take responsibility for their own emotional being."<sup>73</sup> Rather than develop leadership behaviors and skills, Friedman says leaders ought to "focus first ... on the nature of their own presence, rather than techniques for manipulating or motivating others." Leadership is more about one's emotional presence than his or her leadership or intellectual skills.<sup>74</sup>

The goal of self-differentiation is to maintain a "non-anxious presence." This requires a leader to "separate his or her own emotional being from that of his or her followers while still remaining connected."<sup>75</sup> Rather than projecting emotions onto others or blaming others for one's anxiety or discomfort, the well-differentiated leader has the capacity to "take responsibility for his or her own emotional being."<sup>76</sup> A leader needs to clarify his or her emotions and perspectives clearly while remaining connected to others in relationship. This requires not being reactive under stress and anxiety, or using personal defense mechanisms. To respond in this way, leaders have to grow in emotional maturity and intelligence.<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Ibid, 17 (author's emphasis).

<sup>73</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 18.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.,19.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid., 21.

This is particularly true for men and women leaders as they face the stress and challenge of interpreting and responding to gender differences and sexual tensions. Rather than avoid sticky situations, or cast blame or shame on others, leaders need to develop and cultivate emotional awareness and social intelligence to remain connected and grow in unity and maturity. Allender confirms this perspective, especially since leadership calls for maturity in the midst of crisis.<sup>78</sup> Leaders, in stressful situations, often opt for power and authority, undermining mutuality and self-differentiation. Nouwen concurs, and recognizes how often Christians choose power and control over developing healthy, intimate relationships.<sup>79</sup> Self-differentiation allows leaders to release power and control strategies and replace them with leadership presence and emotional connectedness. As leaders model healthy relationships, they influence organizational culture.

Volf speaks to the challenges of gender in identity formation and self-differentiation of leaders.<sup>80</sup> He asks whether or not identity formation needs to happen separately for men and women in order to clarify boundaries and “bolster the identity of each gender,” especially in a culture where gender identity is fluctuating. While this may be a helpful strategy, it is a misguided strategy.<sup>81</sup> The goal of identity formation is to bring men and women together. Volf writes,

Gender identities are essentially related and therefore the specific wholeness of each can be achieved only through the relation to the other, a relation that neither

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<sup>78</sup> Allender, 29.

<sup>79</sup> Nouwen, 60.

<sup>80</sup> Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 184.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 185.

neutralizes nor synthesizes the two, but negotiates the identity of each by readjusting it to the identity of the other.

The goal of identity formation and self-differentiation is personal wholeness and the ability to engage more effectively in relationships with the opposite sex.<sup>82</sup>

How is self-differentiation evident in the Trinity? God is one yet three persons; the Trinity exists in differentiation. Nouwen says, “The one God who is differentiated in himself and is at one with himself then finds his correspondence in a community of human beings, female and male, who unite with one another and are one.”<sup>83</sup> Moltmann says the best way to understand God is found in the doctrine of the Trinity, “which discovers God in difference and in unity.”<sup>84</sup>

How does self-differentiation evidence itself in leadership relationships? Placher, in *Narratives of a Vulnerable God*, says:

I can really be myself only in relation, and I can be in true relation only if I fully respect the otherness of the other. That means ... becoming vulnerable, accepting that I am not fully in control, not in a position to control, or therefore, to know how the story will turn out. ... Acknowledging my limits ... is the only way I can become fully myself.<sup>85</sup>

Cultivating self-differentiation in order to engage more fully in leadership relationships allows one to experience healthy and mature intimacy and connectedness. Only when men and women can be separate yet together can they begin to know one another as valuable individuals without objectifying one another.

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 186.

<sup>83</sup> Moltmann, 218.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, 223.

<sup>85</sup> Placher, 70.



*Trinitarian Relationships are Vulnerable*

Nancy Beach, in *Gifted to Lead*, writes of the first time she led a team of all men. She wanted to lead in a way that honored her gifts and also her gender, so she took a risk and invited her team to share stories of their personal lives. By choosing to model vulnerability, she began her journey as a leader of all men through “building friendships while learning how to tackle our tasks.”<sup>86</sup> Ruth Haley Barton in *Equal to the Task*, made it her goal to “listen to the men in (her) life, not to judge them or convince them or change them but to enter into their experiences in the same way that (she) had been asking them to enter into (hers).” She created openness for anything the men wanted to say or ask. It was important that they be able to listen to one another and speak honestly of their longings for community as men and women.<sup>87</sup>

What is vulnerability? Sociologist Brene Brown in *The Gifts of Imperfection* says vulnerability is sharing stories of unworthiness, shame, and fear that disconnect people from one another, and from living courageously with their whole hearts.<sup>88</sup> When these stories are not shared, it fuels internal messages of not being “good enough.”<sup>89</sup> Christians may readily admit that they are “not good enough,” but without vulnerability through sharing stories, men and women remain separated. It is the act of confession or vulnerability that unites humankind. For Nouwen, confession and love go hand in hand. “Confession and forgiveness are the concrete forms in which we sinful people love one

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<sup>86</sup> Nancy Beach, *Gifted to Lead: The Art of Leading as a Woman in the Church* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2008), 31.

<sup>87</sup> Barton, 14.

<sup>88</sup> Brene Brown, *The Gifts of Imperfection: Your Guide to a Wholehearted Life* (Center City, MD: Hazelden, 2010), 36.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid*, 37.

another.”<sup>90</sup> The paradox of the Christian life is: the degree to which a person is honest about himself or herself is the degree to which he or she experiences the love and grace of God. When men and women confess to one another, they create space to receive love and grace from others.

Choosing vulnerability is difficult for both sexes. Charlie Dawes, Director of First Year Experience at Southeastern University, expressed in a conversation that men may struggle with vulnerability more than women. He describes the male perspective in this way:

Women are more inclined to lead vulnerably; the male ego often does not let him lead vulnerably. Often we want to be superman but we are really only Clark Kent. We don't want others to see Clark Kent.<sup>91</sup>

While vulnerability is difficult for men and women, if what Dawes says is true for most men in leadership, men are then hindered from more readily engaging in vulnerability, reinforcing protective barriers that distance due to shame.

The root of a person's inability to be vulnerable is the experience of shame. Brown describes shame as “that warm feeling that washes over us, making us feel small, flawed, and never good enough.”<sup>92</sup> In the biblical story, shame is universal, an outcome of sin and brokenness. Its first evidence is found in Genesis 3, when the man and woman hide themselves from God and one another and clothe their nakedness. The newly experienced shame resulted in the sinful defense mechanisms of blame and hiding. Brown confirms the biblical representation of shame as a universal human experience. In fact, as a sociologist, she writes, “The only people who don't experience shame lack the

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<sup>90</sup> Nouwen, 46.

<sup>91</sup> Direct quote from a conversation with Charlie Dawes, November 8, 2012. Used by permission.

<sup>92</sup> Brown, 38.

capacity for empathy and human connection.”<sup>93</sup> Brown takes care to distinguish between guilt and shame, defining guilt as response to wrong behavior and shame as the experience of “I am bad.” Brown says guilt is a more positive emotion, one that motivates people to apologize and make amends. In turn, shame, because it is about one’s personhood and not behavior, can take away the desire to want to do better, decreasing the motivation for change.<sup>94</sup> Both, when unaddressed, are detrimental to leadership community.

Even though shame is universal, it is rarely discussed in community, particularly among leaders. Discussing shame requires humility and the courage to overcome fears. Allender, when writing about leaders, adds, “Fear keeps us from trust; narcissism keeps us from authentic confession and addictions keep us from naming our loneliness in the company of others.”<sup>95</sup> For Brown, shame, at its root, is “the fear of being unlovable” yet she notes, to feel shame is to be human; it is part of the human journey. While shame is part of the human journey, it is not part of the image of God in us. Human beings remain less than they were created to be if shame and fear is unaddressed.

Shame is particularly difficult for a leader to overcome. According to Allender, “Most leaders invest too much capital obscuring their need for grace.”<sup>96</sup> In self-protection, leaders often hide, blame, judge or “fix” other people rather than become vulnerable through honest and open sharing. Choosing self-protection over vulnerability impacts leadership. Allender writes:

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid., 41.

<sup>95</sup> Allender, 4-6.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 4.

This is the strange paradox of leading: to the degree you attempt to hide your weaknesses, the more you will need to control those you lead, the more insecure you will become, and the more rigidity you will impose—prompting the ultimate departure of your best people.<sup>97</sup>

Shame is minimized through confession, and opens the door to authenticity in leadership relationships.

Leaders need to see shame as the gateway to transformation. Allender challenges leaders to acknowledge their weaknesses and to dismantle them with others in leadership community.<sup>98</sup> Allender says it is important to share vulnerably:

First, doing so invites others—by the Spirit’s prompting—to look more honestly at their own need for forgiveness, freedom, and courage. It also removes the dividing wall of hierarchy and false assumptions about people in power and gives the leader who humbles himself the opportunity to be lifted up by God.<sup>99</sup>

Vulnerability before others creates opportunity for intimacy. It affirms the communal essence of the image of God and creates space for transformation in the context of community. The willingness to engage one’s story in transformative ways is the essence of embodying the gospel. Brown agrees with Allender’s analysis. She encourages the dismantling of shame with others because “shame loses its power when it is spoken.” By sharing stories in a trusting environment, men and women experience the love and belonging necessary for transformation.<sup>100</sup>

Vulnerability in the midst of shame requires a leader share his or her story and, when necessary, own the consequences of one’s choices.<sup>101</sup> While leaders do not need to

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 173.

<sup>100</sup> Brown, 40.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., 46.

share everything in leadership community, the stories that directly impact one's ability to lead and connect with other leaders need to be shared. Leaders model culture. Creating a space where leaders can share their shame and fear allows them to experience the transformation they are leading others toward. More importantly, story telling shapes identity. Allender writes:

Since stories shape our identity and calling and, therefore, our character, we must work hard to tell stories that are not sugarcoated. We must tell the truth, the whole truth, and a whole lot of the ugly truth.<sup>102</sup>

As leaders model vulnerable and healthy relationships among those they lead, they guide others in identity formation through the stories they share.

Vulnerability is present in the Trinity. William C. Placher in *Narratives of a Vulnerable God* says the church has placed too much emphasis on God as all-powerful, omnipotent, and in charge. Instead, the gospel narrative tells of a God who is love (1 John 4:8). According to Placher, “love involves a willingness to put oneself at risk, and God is in fact vulnerable in love, vulnerable even to great suffering.”<sup>103</sup> In Jesus, God washes the disciples feet, suffers and dies on the cross, and reveals his own human frailty as he weeps over the loss of a friend. Jesus is the human face of God and, through his humanity he shows “how we might seek our own fullest humanity—not in quests of power and wealth and fame but in service, solidarity with the despised and rejected, and the willingness to be vulnerable in love.”<sup>104</sup> Placher sees vulnerability in *perichoresis* and the “love within the Trinity;” a love “willing to be vulnerable lying at the heart of who God is.” While vulnerability among human beings means revealing their sin, shame, and fear,

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<sup>102</sup> Allender, 156.

<sup>103</sup> Placher, xiii.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, xiv.

for God, it is solely connected to love. By being vulnerable in relationships, men and women open themselves to loving as God loves, and being loved as God loves.

*Trinitarian Relationships are Loving*

The essential nature of the Trinity is love. While other aspects of Trinitarian relationship are essential to leadership community, all have the potential to be misconstrued without love, due to a leader's propensity toward power and control. It is easier to use power and control than choose the difficult way of love. Nouwen writes,

Power offers an easy substitute for the hard task of love. It seems easier to be God than to love God, easier to control people than to love people, easier to own life than to love life.<sup>105</sup>

Unfortunately, leaders are prone to grasping after power. As was noted previously Christian leaders often do not know how to develop healthy, intimate relationships choosing power and control instead.<sup>106</sup> This is a sad commentary on Christian leadership. The tendency to grasp after power and control all the more illustrates the need for leaders to be in loving community with one another. By modeling relationships of mutuality, differentiation, and vulnerability to one another, leaders embody the story they seek to lead. By doing this in mixed-gender leadership community, they not only model appropriate loving behavior to those they lead, but model a loving way forward to the church and a secular culture in need of alternative ways for men and women to live and lead together.

*Perichoresis* gives insight into how love evidences itself in community. As was discussed in Chapter 3, the interrelatedness of the Trinity was defined as self-giving

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<sup>105</sup> Nouwen, 59.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 60.

love.<sup>107</sup> Through self-giving love that makes space for another, men and women give up power and control and choose love.<sup>108</sup> Paul's teaching on the mutual submission<sup>109</sup> affirms the self-giving love of the Trinity. Robert Wilken, in the article, "The Resurrection of Jesus and the Doctrine of the Trinity," writes, "Love is the most authentic mark of the Christian life, and love among humans, or within God, requires community with others and a sharing of the deepest kind."<sup>110</sup> Vulnerability in community is how love is revealed.

When leaders model loving community, they pave a way forward for future generations. For those who are "post-modern," the church is "suspect" and a locus of power games.<sup>111</sup> Power and control are often reinforced through hierarchies. While hierarchies have supported church growth, they also have a flaw: hierarchy implies "power, status, and importance."<sup>112</sup> Ron Carucci in *Leadership Divided* recognizes hierarchies may not be able to be completely eliminated, but should not "protect" the leader, impairing relationships, and eroding trust.<sup>113</sup>

While businesses identify hierarchy as an impediment to trust, within the church it is an impediment to love. Nouwen writes,

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<sup>107</sup> Volf, 189.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>109</sup> Ephesians 5:21.

<sup>110</sup> Robert Wilken, "The Resurrection of Jesus and the Doctrine of the Trinity," *Word and World* 2, no. 1 (Winter 1982): 28.

<sup>111</sup> Tim Keel, *Intuitive Leadership: Embracing a Paradigm of Narrative, Metaphor and Chaos* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 107.

<sup>112</sup> Carucci, 31.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., 35 (author's emphasis).

The most important quality of Christian leadership in the future ...is not a leadership of power and control but a leadership of powerlessness and humility in which the suffering servant of God, Jesus Christ, is made manifest ... I am speaking of a leadership in which power is constantly abandoned in favor of love.<sup>114</sup>

Hierarchy allows leaders to easily slip into the role of the powerful one, becoming distant from other leaders and those they lead. Through loving community, leaders become vessels of God's love. Leaders need to embrace God's love and extend it to others in the Trinitarian manner this section illustrates. The choice to love tempers the struggle of power and control, and diminishes the drive for success. Nouwen adds, "The desire to be relevant and successful will gradually disappear and our only desire will be to say with our whole being to our brothers and sisters of the human race, "You are loved. There is no reason to be afraid."<sup>115</sup> By leading from community, leaders not only create space to experience the love of God but also experience the love they desire to convey. When leaders live in love, there is no reason to fear. "Perfect love drives out fear."<sup>116</sup>

### **Conclusion**

While there are various definitions for leadership, what can be concluded is that leadership identity is formed through relationship. Therefore, leadership is not solely a set of acquired skills. Instead, leadership relationships form a distinct cultural identity within an organization. Because human beings are made in the image of God, men and women can begin to carve a new leadership identity and organizational culture through leadership community, embodying the life they are leading others toward. A common narrative and

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<sup>114</sup> Nouwen, 63.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>116</sup> I John 4:18



identity for men and women leaders invites them to live the story they are leading. Through restored relationships, they lead from a place of growing wholeness, imaging God through their relationships.

The interrelatedness of the Trinity forms leadership identity and leadership relationships. As leaders are shaped and formed by the relational qualities of the Trinity leaders can model relationships that transform organizational culture. Mutuality, differentiation, vulnerability, and love form leadership relationships in a way that deepen intimacy and transform the churches and organizations they seek to lead. The doctrine of Trinity provides a nonhierarchical means of defining relationship, shaping leadership identity, and influencing organizational culture.

While these relational qualities are vital to leadership community, without an intentional spiritual formation model to guide their development, they have the potential to become a mere intellectual exercise, lacking the power to transform lives and culture. The next chapter will explore the essential components of a spiritual formation model for a leadership community. When intentionally practiced together, leaders can experience the transformation they lead others toward.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### IDENTITY FORMATION IN LEADERSHIP COMMUNITY

*Men and women alike share a deep desire to be in community and partnership with each other. We want to be in each other's lives in meaningful ways, and when we do not know how to accomplish that, we miss each other. We know that when our relationships are not working, we are not yet all we were created to be.<sup>1</sup> --Ruth Haley Barton*

#### **Introduction**

Chapter 6 examined leadership relationships and their influence on leadership identity and organizational culture. Leadership relationships affect organizational culture and shape the context in which others learn and grow. Men and women, as image bearers of God and those who embody the relational dynamics of the Trinity, can model a new way forward through their relationships. By living the relational qualities of mutuality, differentiation, vulnerability and love, men and women set the tone for life in community that reflects the communal image of God to one another and also to those they lead.

While the relational dynamics of the Trinity are necessary components of leadership identity and gender identity, they do not happen automatically. Each behavior must be intentionally formed in the life of the leader in such a way that the leader is transformed through relationships in community. Change is more than intellectual assent. Behaviors are intentionally formed in community as men and women learn from one another and respond to one another. This chapter will explore how spiritual formation practices, used in mixed-gender community, aid leaders in forming relationships of mutuality, differentiation, vulnerability, and love. Spiritual practices add structure to

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<sup>1</sup> Ruth Haley Barton, *Equal to the Task: Men and Women in Partnership* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 15.

spiritual growth by providing a means for practicing the behaviors leaders seek to model. Men and women leaders are formed through spiritual practices that connect them to one another and to God. Leaders thereby incarnate or embody a common narrative and a common identity.

### **A Spiritual Formation Model for Leadership Community**

In Chapter 6, leadership community was defined as a formal or informal group of men and women leaders who intentionally choose to invest in relationships with one another and grow together through increasing and deepening connection with God and each other. While men and women leaders accomplish tasks together, the relationships between them, not just the tasks they accomplish, shape and form their leadership identity and organizational culture. Four Trinitarian relationship qualities were identified but the ways in which these qualities are developed was not yet discussed. It is this author's premise that Trinitarian relationship qualities are best formed in the lives of leaders when participating in leadership community and by using an intentional spiritual formation model. A formation model creates a structure within which one can implement the practices that form relationships and shape leadership culture.

An intentional spiritual formation model guides men and women seeking to embrace all four aspects of Trinitarian relationships. Dallas Willard in *Renovation of the Heart* defines spiritual formation as “the process by which the human spirit or will is given a definite ‘form’ or character.” Any experience in life can be formative, whether for good or not for good, but Christian spiritual formation forms the “spirit and inner

world in a way that is directed Godward.”<sup>2</sup> Marjorie Thompson in *Soul Feast* describes spiritual formation as “conformation to the image of God by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>3</sup> Thus, the restoration of the image of God in the lives of human beings is the intent of Christian spiritual formation and transformation.

A spiritual formation model guides and structures the spiritual formation process. A spiritual formation model uses intentional practices for specific purposes. Once established, a spiritual formation model can be adapted and adjusted to the leader’s environment. Defining specific practices and purposes allows for intentionality in the formation process. A formation model provides a means for men and women leaders to flesh out their common identity as human beings, created in the image of God, and their leadership identity in the context of community.

A spiritual formation model is helpful if growth in community becomes challenging or difficult. James Davison Hunter says when a church is able to embrace a common narrative and common practices in supportive and accountable community, spiritual formation “will unfold as a natural expression of its common life.”<sup>4</sup> Dan Allender in *Leading with a Limp*, writes that community is the best environment for spiritual formation, especially when one needs to share difficult things. In community, there is someone to “help me bear the freeing burden of truth.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Willard, Dallas (2011-12-21). *Renovation of the Heart: Putting on the Character of Christ* with Bonus Content (Designed for Influence) (pp. 19-20). Navpress. Kindle Edition.

<sup>3</sup> Marjorie J. Thompson, *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2005), 7.

<sup>4</sup> James Davison Hunter, *To Change the World: The Irony, Tragedy, and Possibility of Christianity in the Late Modern World* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2010), 237.

<sup>5</sup> Dan B. Allender, *Leading with a Limp: Turning Your Struggles into Strengths* (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2006), 159.

I have identified four practices that shape a spiritual formation model for men and women leaders in community. A model offered by James Bryan Smith incorporates some of the same components.<sup>6</sup> The theory behind Smith's model is found in Dallas Willard's book, *The Divine Conspiracy*. According to Willard, two primary objectives must be present in any transformation model. The first objective is that Christians must grow to *experience* the love of Jesus so profoundly that they do not doubt any limit to God's intended goodness toward them. The Christian is then able to respond in obedience from a place of love, recognizing that "perfect love casts out fear" (1 John 4:18).<sup>7</sup> The second objective addresses the unconscious mind, not only one's thoughts or beliefs. According to Willard, most human actions are a result of unconscious intentions, not consciously chosen ones. Therefore, people need to have a "purposeful disruption of (their) 'automatic' thoughts, feelings and actions by doing different things with (their) body." Through intentional spiritual practices, the whole body is attentive to God, allowing the whole self to be engaged in the process of change and transformation.<sup>8</sup> For Willard, these two objectives are met by engaging one's story (or life events) in a community of faith, in the presence of the Holy Spirit through spiritual disciplines. Willard calls this model the "Golden Triangle of Spiritual Growth" and the means by which Christians can experience an "embodied" transformation from the inside out. Willard's formation model promotes

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<sup>6</sup> James Bryan Smith, *A Good and Beautiful God: Falling in Love with the God Jesus Knows* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 24.

<sup>7</sup> Dallas Willard, *The Divine Conspiracy: Rediscovering Our Hidden Life in God* (San Francisco, CA: HarperCollins Publishers, 1997), 321 (emphasis mine).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 322.

the restoration of the image of Christ in the lives of men and women, leading to a greater experience of integrity and wholeness in their lives.<sup>9</sup>

By engaging the practices in spiritual formation community, men and women leaders can carve a new identity and a new leadership culture. The practices that shape gender identity and leadership identity include: 1) mutuality through a shared narrative, 2) self-differentiation through contemplative practices, 3) vulnerability through group spiritual direction, and 4) loving presence through surrender to God and submission to one another.

#### *Mutuality through a Common Narrative*

Christian leaders have predominantly taught the Bible as propositional truth. While propositional truth shapes a person's behavior and affects the mind, stories engage the heart.<sup>10</sup> A. Steven Evans in his article, "Matters of the Heart," says storytelling plays a critical role in changing a culture's worldview<sup>11</sup> mainly because stories move the heart. A change in heart can lead to a change in culture and a change in worldview.<sup>12</sup> Catherine M. Wallace, in her article, "Storytelling, Doctrine, and Spiritual Formation," says a story

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 347.

<sup>10</sup> Tom Steffen, "Pedagogical Conversions: From Propositions to Story and Symbol," *Missiology* (Vol. 38, No. 2, 2010), 142. In his article, Steffen contrasts propositional truth as a means of evangelism to the preferred learning preference of story among the Antipolo/Amduntug Ifugao people, an animistic tribe in the Philippines. The tribe's preference for meta-narrative forced Steffen to reconsider his pedagogy and how story influences change.

<sup>11</sup> A. Steven Evans, "Matters of the Heart: Orality, Story and Cultural Transformation—The Critical Role of Story in Affecting Worldview," *Missiology* 28, no. 2 (April 2010): 185.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 186.

is true and good when it “grabs you by the throat before you have had time to think thoughts.” While doctrine is important, storytelling is where life and faith meet.<sup>13</sup>

Storytelling is an important facet of spiritual formation. Because storytelling engages the heart, it allows one to not only hear truth but also experience it emotionally. By experiencing it emotionally, an individual can be more fully engaged with the information they are hearing. Storytelling can be used in many ways, but there are two specific uses that apply to mixed-gender teams. The first is a biblical meta-narrative as a means of framing the story of mutuality in community. The second is men and women telling personal stories as a means of self-awareness and self-revelation to others.

Andy Crouch in *Culture Making* says, “Human beings always and everywhere have found themselves, sensing that they are in the midst of a story.”<sup>14</sup> By identifying the overarching biblical story, men and women find their place and their identity in the greater story. While both biblical and systematic theology obtain data through studying the Bible, biblical theology takes a more historical approach, identifying the story and providing historical and theological unity.<sup>15</sup>

Of the five approaches to biblical theology listed in *Understanding Biblical Theology*, the Worldview-Story approach helps men and women frame and understand their personal story in light of the larger, overarching biblical narrative. The Worldview-

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<sup>13</sup> Catherine M. Wallace, “Storytelling, Doctrine, and Spiritual Formation,” *Anglican Theological Review* 81, no. 1 (1999): 41.

<sup>14</sup> Andy Crouch, *Culture Making: Recovering Our Creative Calling* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 23.

<sup>15</sup> Edward W. Klink III, and Darian R. Lockett, *Understanding Biblical Theology: A Comparison of Theory and Practice* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publications, 2012), 21.

Story approach identifies the narrative thread throughout the Bible.<sup>16</sup> N. T. Wright is a theologian who espouses this approach. In *Scripture and the Authority of God*, Wright says Scripture “refreshes our memory and understanding of the story in which we ourselves are actors,” and helps men and women understand who they are, where they are going, and their own role and place in the midst of God’s story. Wright’s biblical worldview aligns with the Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation framework for the biblical narrative.<sup>17</sup> For Wright, it is important to not only understand what the Bible says but also understand the priorities of the gospel message.<sup>18</sup> Crouch, who also espouses this view, recognizes one’s biblical worldview must originate in the creation story. Without a proper understanding of who human beings are created to be, men and women will not correctly interpret the ongoing narrative of the biblical story.<sup>19</sup>

The biblical theology of Worldview-Story and the biblical meta-narrative of Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation allows individuals to find their place in the greater biblical story and frame their lives in light of God’s story. By utilizing Worldview-Story biblical theology as a tool for spiritual formation, men and women can locate their own story of mutuality within the biblical story and share intimate stories of their personal lives and leadership experiences; they can identify where they fit in God’s greater story. In particular, men and women can understand mutuality through whom they are created to be. Their identity as image bearers of God roots them in the biblical

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>17</sup> N. T. Wright, *The New Testament and the People of God* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress Press, 1992), 132.

<sup>18</sup> N. T. Wright, *Scripture and the Authority of God: How to Read the Bible Today* (New York, NY: Harper Collins Publishers, 2011), 116-117.

<sup>19</sup> Crouch, 102.



narrative as was noted in Chapter 2. The mutuality afforded them through their common story can shape their relationships, inform their identity, and transform their culture.

Worldview is defined as “a perceptual framework” through which men and women see and interpret their worlds.<sup>20</sup> All worldviews, no matter the origin, answer four questions everyone faces: 1) *Who am I?* 2) *Where am I?* 3) *What’s wrong?* and 4) *What’s the remedy?*<sup>21</sup> The questions, answered in community, establish men and women in their common humanity and common identity, in the story of God.

Interestingly, the Worldview-Story approach to biblical theology, especially as understood through the Creation, Fall, Redemption, and Consummation framework, parallels the essential elements of story identified in narrative theory. Herman, McPhale, and Phelan in *Teaching Narrative Theory*, answer the question, “What are the properties that define a text as narrative?”<sup>22</sup> For Herman, et. al., “events generally follows a basic pattern of a state of harmony, a disruption of that harmony, and an attempt to restore the original harmony.”<sup>23</sup> Based on the description of the essential elements of narrative, the Worldview-Story approach to biblical theology coincides with the essential elements of story and provides a cohesive story for humankind.

The ability to frame one’s story through the biblical narrative gives individuals a cohesive narrative for their leadership community and for those they lead. Dan Allender in *Leading with a Limp*, says, “Every leader is a storyteller who narrates on behalf of the

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<sup>20</sup> Brian J. Walsh and J. Richard Middleton, *The Transforming Vision: Shaping a Christian Worldview* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 17.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>22</sup> David Herman, Brian McHale, and James Phelan, eds. *Teaching Narrative Theory* (New York, NY: The Modern Language Association of America, 2010), 2.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

community the core reasons for its existence.”<sup>24</sup> By knowing who men and women are created to be, how sin and brokenness has affected their lives, what it means to be redeemed and restored, and an eschatological vision for “all things being made new” in God’s eternal kingdom, men and women can more easily find their place in God’s ongoing biblical narrative. Men and women not only understand the story but also embody the story as people of the story of God.

While the first aspect of storytelling is the biblical meta-narrative, the second is when leaders share personal stories in community. It includes telling the painful and difficult parts of their stories. Allender affirms the need for sharing stories in community and says the leader will not be able to *understand* the story of God without entering into and embracing his or her own story.<sup>25</sup> By embracing and sharing one’s own unique and often-painful story, leaders have the opportunity to experience deeper, more authentic sharing in community.

Men and women have the opportunity to bond through their mutual stories. Hearing stories of how men and women are more common than different provides opportunity to understand and experience the mutuality of their lives. This allows men and women to embody the mutuality they desire and incarnate the message of mutuality as it is lived in communion with one another and those they lead.

### *Self-Differentiation through Contemplative Practices*

While biblical theology provides a framework for a common narrative of mutuality, contemplative practices provide the opportunity for men and women to grow

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<sup>24</sup> Allender, 155.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 161.

in self-differentiation. Adele Calhoun in the *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, says activity and productivity are a priority in western culture and men and women rarely take time to stop “doing” and instead just “be.” While mixed-gender teams do well at completing the tasks of ministry and leadership, they do not do well at being together with one another in community. Contemplative practices invite men and women to be present to the moment with hearts receptive to whatever may happen and whatever God may reveal.<sup>26</sup>

Silence, solitude, and centering prayer<sup>27</sup> are contemplative practices that aid in self-differentiation. These practices create an opportunity for the disruption of one’s thoughts, feelings, and behaviors, allowing men and women to be more mindful of what is going on in their inner self. While many evangelicals use spiritual practices that actively *engage* the mind (such as conversational prayer or Bible reading), contemplative spiritual disciplines *still* the mind and one’s inner voices. Ruth Haley Barton in *Sacred Rhythms* says spiritual practices keep a person “open and available to God,” so transformation of the inner person can take place.<sup>28</sup> For Barton contemplative practices cultivate intimacy with God and increase a person’s awareness of God’s “initiatives” toward them.<sup>29</sup> Thomas Keating, known for the practice of centering prayer, says

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<sup>26</sup>Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 49.

<sup>27</sup> Definitions and examples of how to practice silence, solitude, and centering prayer can be found in Appendix A.

<sup>28</sup> Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 12.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

contemplative prayer brings human beings into “the presence of God” by “reducing the hyperactivity of our minds and of our lives.”<sup>30</sup>

Pastors and counselors are discovering that contemplative spiritual practices are beneficial in promoting change that transforms from the inside out. Kirk Bingaman in “The Art of Contemplative and Mindfulness Practice,” studies the use of contemplative practices in pastoral care and counseling. While western Christianity has predominantly focused on what one believes, Bingaman argues that Christianity should utilize spiritual practice *along with* ascribing to certain beliefs. He recognizes that beliefs (or doctrine) are important to faith but that doctrines ought to guide an individual toward deepening their relationship with God.<sup>31</sup> Parker Palmer, in *A Hidden Wholeness*, agrees with Bingaman and calls the separation of doctrine and experiences “the divided life,” illustrating a lack of wholeness in the individual.<sup>32</sup> Daniel Siegel, in *The Mindful Brain*, says attention to the present moment can improve one’s “subjective mental life with its feelings and thoughts,” and improve interpersonal relationships. Siegel says contemplative awareness “harnesses the social circuitry of one’s own brain to enable (men and women) to develop an attuned relationship in one’s own mind.”<sup>33</sup> The attunement to one’s own thoughts and feelings promotes self-differentiation and enhances interpersonal relationships through greater self-awareness.

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<sup>30</sup> Thomas Keating, *Intimacy with God: An Introduction to Centering Prayer* (New York, NY: Crossroads Publications, 1994), 11.

<sup>31</sup> Kirk A. Bingaman, “The Art of Contemplative and Mindfulness Practice: Incorporating the Findings of Neuroscience into Pastoral Care and Counseling,” *Pastoral Psychology* 60 (2011): 478.

<sup>32</sup> Parker J. Palmer, *A Hidden Wholeness: The Journey Toward an Undivided Life* (San Francisco, CA: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 2004), 7.

<sup>33</sup> Daniel J. Siegel, *The Mindful Brain: Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton and Co., 2007), 3.

Increased self-awareness and self-differentiation enable an individual to more readily engage in healthy relationships with others. Friedman says a leader's ability to offer a well-differentiated presence means being able to separate his or her "emotional being from that of his or her followers while still remaining connected."<sup>34</sup> By learning to be present to God and to oneself through silence, solitude, and centering prayer, a leader can become comfortable facing his or her own thoughts and emotions,<sup>35</sup> enabling oneself to be more authentic in his or her relationships.<sup>36</sup> Contemplative practices enhance one's intimacy with God and self, increasing the potential for self-differentiation, enabling a leader to take responsibility for their emotional health.

While not speaking directly to the topic of self-differentiation, Hands and Fehr in their book *Spiritual Wholeness for Clergy*, write of intimacy with self as a means of spiritual health. Their concern is that clergy practice proper self-care or "ownership and appreciation of self." According to Hands and Fehr, many clergy live behind a façade or mask. By diverting emotional energy toward self-protection and maintaining a false self-image, they are not able to maintain proper self-care, which supports and nurtures wholeness between one's affective and cognitive self. Behind the façade is a person fearful of being exposed and found lacking.<sup>37</sup>

When a person's façade is removed, he or she feels exposed. Shame accompanies the exposure and hinders self-intimacy. Hands and Fehr define self-intimacy as a

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<sup>34</sup> Edwin H. Friedman, *A Failure of Nerve: Leadership in the Age of the Quick Fix* (New York, NY: Seabury Press, 2007), 17.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>37</sup> Donald R. Hands and Wayne L. Fehr, *Spiritual Wholeness for Clergy: A New Psychology of Intimacy with God, Self, and Others* (New York: The Alban Institute, 1993), 29.

thorough knowledge of one's own "life, history, and limitations." A person's ability to be intimate with the self parallels one's ability to be intimate with others and with God. Limitations in one area will directly impact another.<sup>38</sup> For those who experience a separation between head and heart, or their cognitive and affective self, healing begins when the separation between head and heart is overcome.<sup>39</sup>

Self-differentiation, self-intimacy, and contemplative practices go hand in hand. Contemplative practices increase self-awareness, self-differentiation and God-awareness. As a result, men and women are more mindful of the self that is brought into community. Palmer would say that contemplative practices bring one's "inner and outer worlds back into harmony."<sup>40</sup> For Palmer, the practice of solitude is essential for wholeness, for in solitude one is "compelled to listen to the self."<sup>41</sup> Since humankind is predisposed to self-deception, Palmer recognizes contemplative practices alone cannot guide one toward wholeness; the journey of wholeness is one that is ultimately accomplished in community with others.<sup>42</sup> So, while contemplative practices are important for growth in self-differentiation and intimacy, community provides essential support in the journey toward interpersonal wholeness and communal oneness.

### *Vulnerability through Group Spiritual Direction*

If vulnerability is to take place, a safe community is needed. Creating a safe community where one can be authentic and reveal the tender parts of the self to others

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>40</sup> Palmer, 17.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 53.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 22.

allows relationships to deepen and love to grow. Group spiritual direction is a safe group structure where men and women can experience vulnerability in community.

Group spiritual direction is different from individual spiritual direction. Alice Fryling in *Seeking God Together*, differentiates between the two. Spiritual direction is a one on one relationship between a director and a directee where director helps the directee pay attention to the “transforming work of God”<sup>43</sup> in their life. Group spiritual direction is a listening group, consisting of three to six people, who meet to discern the work of God in the lives of each other. It differs from the relationship between director and directee as group spiritual direction is a relationship among peers. It is not a Bible study or a fellowship group where the intent is to study scripture and share stories. With group spiritual direction, members “listen carefully and deeply to one another,”<sup>44</sup> while “seeking together to hear the direction of God” in a person’s life.<sup>45</sup> Participants listen to one another and ask questions that direct a member toward God. While what one shares is important, the most important aspect of group spiritual direction is discerning the movement of God in his or her life.<sup>46</sup>

Others also affirm the relational dynamics of group spiritual direction. Parker Palmer says a community that welcomes the soul and helps one to hear its voice is a “circle of trust,” creating a safe place for the soul to “show up.”<sup>47</sup> Ruth Haley Barton calls intentional community a “spiritual discipline” especially when one focuses on his or her

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<sup>43</sup> Alice Fryling, *Seeking God Together: An Introduction to Group Spiritual Direction* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2009), 11.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>47</sup> Palmer, 22.

relationship with God in the company of others.<sup>48</sup> The common focus in all of these groups is being present to God and present to one another in community. Focusing on God sets the tone for the content of the group; it is vulnerability with God in the company of others.

Group spiritual direction offers the dual components of listening and asking questions, creating opportunity for intimacy and honest conversation. The act of listening to another person promotes trust and openness, encouraging self-disclosure. Fryling says, “Listening to another person in a way that helps that person hear the grace and truth of God is one of the greatest gifts we can give.”<sup>49</sup> Glen Boyd in “Pastoral Conversation,” says listening shows value by demonstrating the importance of the other person over oneself.<sup>50</sup> Group spiritual direction not only provides a place of listening, it also creates a context where one can be heard.

Listening is an uncommon practice in many Christian communities. Individuals have learned to study the Bible, pray, share stories, and give advice. Rarely have they been taught how to listen to one another. Often men and women do not listen to each other because listening is “hard work.”<sup>51</sup> Rather than listen, it is easier to tell others what we think.<sup>52</sup>

Yet, listening promotes healing and wholeness and encourages vulnerability. Listening allows one to hear his or her inner voice, shed façades, and reveal the true

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<sup>48</sup> Barton, *Sacred Rhythms*, 16.

<sup>49</sup> Fryling, 20.

<sup>50</sup> Glen E. Boyd, Pastoral Counseling: Relational Listening and Open Ended Questions,” *Pastoral Psychology* 51, no. 5 (May 2003): 347.

<sup>51</sup> Luis Bush, “The Power of Listening,” *Missiology: An International Review* 33, no. 1 (2005): 18.

<sup>52</sup> Fryling, 35.



self.<sup>53</sup> M. Robert Mulholland in *The Deeper Journey*, says façades are often a defense mechanism for fear. Listening minimizes defenses and allows one to be vulnerable and shed the false self.<sup>54</sup> Interestingly, Fryling says, “intense listening is indistinguishable from love.”<sup>55</sup> Therefore, in order to love well, men and women must learn to listen well.

Listening includes the ability to ask good questions. Fryling says the most helpful thing we can offer a person is a “meaningful question.”<sup>56</sup> Asking good questions “changes us and helps us to focus on others.”<sup>57</sup> Open-ended questions allow one to ponder situations more deeply, giving opportunity for the individual to pay attention to their internal messages and the voice of God in community. Boyd says asking questions from the stance of “not knowing” gives the individual time to reflect on their life and story, “nurturing an attitude of curiosity.”<sup>58</sup> Therefore, how questions are asked is as important as one’s ability to listen to what is said.

The vulnerability of group spiritual direction must first promotes intimacy with God, then with others. James Loder in the article, “The Great Sex Charade and the Loss of Intimacy,” affirms this progression noting that the deepest intimacy one can experience is intimacy with God.<sup>59</sup> For Loder, intimacy with Christ is the deepest

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<sup>53</sup> J. Lennart Cedarleaf, “Listening Revisited,” *The Journal of Pastoral Care* 38, no. 4 (1984): 314.

<sup>54</sup> M. Robert Mulholland, *The Deeper Journey: The Spirituality of Discovering Your True Self* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006), 32.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>56</sup> Fryling, 46.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>58</sup> Boyd, 355.

<sup>59</sup> James E. Loder, “The Great Sex Charade and the Loss of Intimacy,” *Word and World*. 21 (Winter 2001): 82.

intimacy one can have and it redefines intimacy in all other relationships, even sexual intimacy.<sup>60</sup> He adds,

The sex charade appears and thrives in church life as in the world because we do not know how nor do we have the theological nerve to investigate the depth of spiritual intimacy we want in all our leaders ... Such spiritual intimacy is the most truly explosive and the most neglected force in the life and death of our church communities.<sup>61</sup>

A spiritual formation community that promotes vulnerability and cultivates deep, intimate communion with Christ and intimate communion with one another allow leaders to be rooted in the love of Christ. Their vulnerability with one another is formed from their intimacy and vulnerability with Christ.

While some may be uncomfortable with vulnerability in mixed-gender community, it is not uncommon in other settings. Vulnerability between men and women who are not married to each other happens in support groups, counseling, and spiritual direction where those of the opposite sex share intimate details about their lives. As was noted in Chapter 6 under the section, “Leadership Relationships between Men and Women,” vulnerability in a mixed-gender group may actually minimize the potential for sexual indiscretion rather than enhance it. Those who do not have healthy, adult opportunities for emotional intimacy are more prone to sexual temptation and acting out than those who do.<sup>62</sup> While having appropriate guidelines for group conduct may be helpful, boundaries that limit personal sharing can hinder the potential for emotional and spiritual community that can develop in mixed-gender groups.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 84.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Hands and Fehr, xx.

Within the church, men and women are often guided by protective boundaries established by fear. Some feel that a safe group is one where strong boundaries are in place, but strong boundaries are often rooted in fear rather than love. Boundaries established because of fear do not give men and women the opportunity to develop healthy male-female friendships guided by purity and familial intent. I recently spoke with a pastor about the struggles that can erupt in relationships between men and women leaders. His solution was to pull the men aside and admonish them to treat women appropriately. This was his best solution for correcting behaviors or intentions that might be inappropriate when men and women work together. I suggested there may be another way; that it is important for men and women to hear their struggles, and to deepen their relationships in mixed-gender community. Only then may men and women learn to love and encourage one another in ways that are helpful to each person.

While it is important to advocate for familial or brother-sister relationships between men and women in the church, the distinction cannot be offered without providing education and structure for creating healthy male-female friendships between men and women who are not married to each other. Group spiritual direction and the spiritual formation model identified in this chapter provide the structure and context for the education to happen. By incarnating the model among the men and women leaders of the church, men and women can experience and refine their relationships. The relationships developed within this structure will help them lead more effectively as friends, and brothers and sisters in the family of God, offering a new model for relationships between men and women in the church.

*Loving Presence through Surrender to God and Submission to One Another*

While the first three components of spiritual formation community, a common narrative, contemplative practices and group spiritual direction, are connected to practices lived in community, the last component addresses the heart attitude men and women exemplify in community. The fourth quality of Trinitarian relationships is love. In Chapter 6, power, hierarchy, and control were presented in contrast to the love evident in the Trinity. In this chapter, surrender to God and submission to one another are offered as the means by which men and women love one another as leaders in spiritual formation community.

Dallas Willard's spiritual formation theory identifies love as the foundation for spiritual formation. For Willard, all transformation proceeds from a heart rooted in the love of God and demonstrated in love for God. When a disciple recognizes there is no limit to God's love and goodness toward him or her nor lack of power and intention from God to choose love for them, love becomes transformative in the life of the Christian and makes obedience a response of love toward God.<sup>63</sup>

While Christians intellectually assent to God's love, most do not live as though they are deeply loved by God. In order for love to transform a person's life and relationships, Willard says "love for and delight in God" will be the orientation of the whole person.<sup>64</sup> The love of Jesus must fill a person's heart and life.<sup>65</sup> Only when a

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<sup>63</sup> Willard, 321.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 324.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., 336.

person recognizes God loves her just as she is, will she be able to obey with her whole heart and trust God's goodness toward her.<sup>66</sup>

David Benner in *Surrender to Love*, also says love is foundational to Christian transformation. He writes:

Christianity puts surrender to love right at the core of the spiritual journey. Christ following is saying yes to God's affirming *yes!* If it is anything less than a response to love, Christ-following is not fully Christian.<sup>67</sup>

For Benner, when an individual knows and experiences the deep love of God, he becomes a person who loves God and loves others.<sup>68</sup> To experience the transformational love of God, an individual needs to surrender or relinquish control of his will to God, who loves him.<sup>69</sup> Benner distinguishes between obedience and surrender. While surrender is motivated by love, obedience as an act of the will can be motivated by fear, or compliance, which is not rooted in love. Benner says:

By contrasting obedience and surrender I do not want to put too much distance between them. Those who surrender obey. But not all who obey surrender. It is quite easy to obey God for the wrong reasons. What God desires is submission of our heart and will, not simply compliance in our behavior.<sup>70</sup>

Surrender to God requires active trust, believing God's intent toward an individual is good and loving. Benner says that anything other than surrender to love keeps the kingdom of "self" intact.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid., 337.

<sup>67</sup> David G. Benner, *Surrender to Love: Discovering the Heart of Christian Spirituality* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 10.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 59.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 56.

Others agree with Benner and Willard. Hands and Fehr say, “The discovery that one is loved by God must eventually take priority over all other ways of relating to God... (without love), all else is likely to be efforts at self-validation, efforts to ward off shame and condemnation.”<sup>72</sup> Barton says naming one’s desire in Christ’s presence opens the door for the intimacy with God and “creates the possibility for Christ to be with us in a way that meets our truest need.”<sup>73</sup> David K. Naugle in *Reordered Love, Reordered Lives*, says the primary effect of the gospel is “the reordering of our deepest loves and desires.”<sup>74</sup> This includes reordering one’s love for God, love for self, love for others, and love for creation.<sup>75</sup> A person’s love for God reorients his or her entire being.

Spiritual formation community provides an opportunity for men and women to reorient their lives to the love of God and in love toward one another. While loving God and embracing God’s love is the foundation for transformation, the love of God also shapes how men and women relate to one another. While surrender describes a person’s response of love to God, submission describes how men and women respond in love toward one another. When men and women are deeply rooted in the love of God, they are able submit to one another; they need no longer vie for one another’s love because God loves them ultimately. God’s love informs their identity. Because men and women are the beloved of God,<sup>76</sup> they are able to respond in love toward others. Because they are deeply

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<sup>72</sup> Hands and Fehr, 55.

<sup>73</sup> Barton, *Sacred Rhythms*, 27.

<sup>74</sup> David K. Naugle, *Reordered Love, Reordered Lives: Learning the Deep Meaning of Happiness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2008), 120.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>76</sup> Deuteronomy 33:12.

loved by God, they can give up their own personal rights and agendas and submit to the other in love.

Love is cultivated when using the other three practices in community. The biblical story and personal stories cultivate mutuality and a deepening care for the other. Contemplative practices develop one's self-differentiation, and ability to love one another from an undivided self. Group spiritual direction offers an embodied love through listening as men and women are given the opportunity to experience of the love of God in community. Through community, men and women embody their identity as image bearers of God, exemplifying the interrelatedness of the Trinity.

Paul's instruction on mutual submission found in Ephesians 5:21 demonstrates how men and women love as Christ loves. As was noted in Chapter 6, the mutual submission of men and women is rooted in the interrelatedness of the Trinity, where the relationship of the Trinity is one of mutual, self-giving love. Jesus' submission to the Father demonstrates the nature of self-giving love. As men and women choose the same mindset as Jesus who "did not consider equality with God as something to be used for his own advantage,"<sup>77</sup> they demonstrate mutual submission through service, humility, and "not looking out for (their) own interests but each of you to the interests of others."<sup>78</sup> It is the interrelatedness of the Trinity in mutual, self-giving love that guides men and women in living mutually submissive lives toward one another.

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<sup>77</sup> Philippians 2:6-7.

<sup>78</sup> Philippians 2:3-4.

Paul instructs the church to love through recalling the manner in which Jesus loved and submitted to the Father. In the verses prior to Paul's instruction on mutual submission, he writes,

Follow God's example as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.<sup>79</sup>

Love demonstrated in community corresponds to the description of love given to the Christians at the church in Corinth in I Corinthians 13:4-8:

Love is patient; love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.<sup>80</sup>

When men and women live as those loved by God, they are free to love one another without an agenda or ulterior motive. As men and women surrender to God's love, they are freed to love one another because God ultimately loves them. They can also respond to one another with integrity and purity; love guides their heart and actions. By loving one another, men and women not only shape their gender identity but also change the leadership and organizational culture of the ministries and churches they lead. According to James Davison Hunter, it is the faithful presence of men and women that changes the world. When men and women "pursue each other, identify with each other, and direct (their) lives toward the flourishing of each other through sacrificial love," they display the love of God in community.<sup>81</sup> For Hunter, human flourishing begins "when God's

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<sup>79</sup> Ephesians 5:1.

<sup>80</sup> I Corinthians 13: 4-8a.

<sup>81</sup> Hunter, 244.



word of love becomes flesh in us, is embodied in us, (and) is enacted through us.”<sup>82</sup> Men and women leaders thereby live a common identity. When embodying the love of God in community, they offer a faithful presence to one another and those they lead. They also embody Jesus’ prayer in John 17:

My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.<sup>83</sup>

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, a spiritual formation model was presented whereby one can grow in the Trinitarian relationship components presented in Chapter 6. By demonstrating Trinitarian relationships through intentional practices in spiritual formation community, leaders model and embody the relational dynamic they seek to become. By embodying relationship practices in community, men and women begin to shape their identity through their relationships with one another, including their gender identity as men and women in community, and their leadership identity, which shapes organizational culture. Men and women form their lives around a common identity and common narrative using spiritual practices in spiritual formation community. The spiritual formation model offered in this chapter embodies mutuality, self-differentiation, vulnerability, and love, forming the lives of men and women leaders. By intentionally engaging the spiritual

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>83</sup> John 17:20-23.

formation model in community, leaders embody the identity and message they seek to become.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### CONCLUSION

*Leaders who have a firm understanding of identity can look at the world in an integrated way, blending internal and external experiences and events to produce a unified “story” about how things are—or how they might be.*<sup>1</sup> --Laurence Ackerman

*A focus on identity allows us to put thinking and being back together.*<sup>2</sup>  
--Klyne R. Snodgrass

#### **Practical Application**

The purpose of this thesis was to study the spiritual formation of men and women leaders to discover how intentional identity formation in community can influence leadership relationships and to explain how to cultivate an environment of health, mutuality, and trust among men and women leaders on ministry teams. The desired outcome was to relate theology and praxis so that men and women leaders can lead and model a redemptive way forward through the community and culture they create. MaryKate Morse in *Making Room for Leadership* echoes the leadership outcomes of this thesis and writes, “Leaders . . . pursue a redemptive present and transformative future.”<sup>3</sup> Identity formation in mixed-gender leadership community is a means by which a redemptive present and a transformative future can happen for men and women leaders.

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<sup>1</sup> Laurence D. Ackerman, *Leadership is Destiny: Leadership and the Roots of Value Creation* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2000), 2-3.

<sup>2</sup> Klyne R. Snodgrass, “Introduction to the Hermeneutic of Identity,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 168 (January-March 2011): 9

<sup>3</sup> MaryKate Morse, *Making Room for Leadership: Power, Presence and Influence* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 24.

Ministry leaders need to proactively address the way in which men and women leaders work together. While inviting women into all levels of leadership within the church and ministry is an important step, how men and women live and lead together is another important step. As was noted in this thesis, it is the relationships between men and women leaders that ultimately influences organizational culture. How they relate to one another shapes the context in which men and women lead and models a common identity that is formed in their lives, influencing the lives of those they lead.

This thesis offers a theological foundation and practical way forward for identity formation and leadership formation for mixed-gender ministry teams. By identifying the elements of Trinitarian relationships and by offering a spiritual formation model that allows men and women to engage the relational practices in community, men and women can choose to be formed in a common identity as image bearers of God in community. By using a spiritual formation model to intentionally guide leaders in these practices, men and women can create a culture of health, mutuality, trust, and wholeness through their relationships, influencing their church and ministry environments.

While specific Trinitarian relationship dynamics and a spiritual formation model are presented, how the practices are implemented in the context of ministry teams and the church is not discussed. In conclusion, therefore, I want to offer several ways the spiritual formation model can be implemented. While each ministry context is different, having examples can guide a leader in choosing the best way to introduce the relational dynamics and practices in one's own leadership environment.

The long-term goal of this thesis is to create a spiritual formation curriculum to give practical guidance to church leaders for implementing the spiritual formation model

offered. By having a ready-made curriculum or book, leaders can focus on the processes rather than having to create them on their own. The goal will be to provide structure and flexibility so that leaders can make choices and adjustments that fit their context.

Instruction will be offered for each relational dynamic and spiritual practice; so if leaders choose not to implement a particular part of the resource, they will understand its impact on the leaders and their development.

### *Curriculum Content*

The curriculum will include several facets. While components of the formation model are already addressed in Chapters 6 and 7, the format that follows gives further structure to the relationship dynamics and spiritual formation practices presented.

Building on the practices identified in Chapter 7, the following curriculum structure allows leaders to implement the spiritual formation model content in a progressive manner, building both practices and relationship dynamics in the process.

The first step of the process will be to instruct leaders in the contemplative spiritual formation practices identified in Chapter 7. The practices offer a foundation for self-differentiation and application of the other materials presented in the spiritual formation model. By guiding leaders in the practices of silence, solitude and centering prayer, men and women can begin to cultivate contemplative skills that aid in self-differentiation, self-awareness, and growth in the other practices in the context of community. While the practices can be learned in community and practiced in

community, they also can be utilized in one's personal spiritual formation outside of the leadership community.<sup>4</sup>

The second step is instruction in the biblical theology of Worldview-Story. By training men and women in the biblical story of who they are created to be, how sin and brokenness has impacted their lives, how the redemptive work of Christ redeems and restores not only them personally but all created order, and a vision for an eschatological future, men and women can more readily place their own stories within a greater framework of God's purposes. Doing so allows men and women to be formed together by a common narrative of mutuality in community. It also gives opportunity for men and women to share their personal stories in mixed-gender community.<sup>5</sup>

The benefit of the Worldview-Story narrative in community is that it gives men and women the chance to share the brokenness and sin of their stories. While it is easy to brush aside the difficult and painful aspects of our lives and stories, using the biblical worldview approach provides a context whereby the stories can be told, and told again. It is important for men and women to share both their dignity and their depravity in the context of community; to be affirmed for who they are as image-bearers of God, and to

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<sup>4</sup> While a spiritual formation model can offer instruction on contemplative practices, several other key resources were referred to in this thesis. Ruth Haley Barton in her book *Sacred Rhythms*, instructs the reader on the use of solitude and centering prayer. Ruth Haley Barton's book *Invitation to Solitude and Silence*, although not directly referred to in this thesis, instructs men and women on the practices of silence and solitude. Adele Ahlberg Calhoun in *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* also provides a list of contemplative practices, including silence, solitude and centering prayer, and practical meals for introducing them into one's life. This book has also been referenced in this thesis. All three books are located in the bibliography.

<sup>5</sup> Several helpful resources for learning a Worldview-Story approach to biblical theology include Walsh and Middleton's book, *The Transforming Vision*, N. T. Wright's book, *Scripture and the Authority of God*, Andy Crouch's book, *Culture Making* (while the whole book is not about worldview-story, it does lay a foundation for this approach to reading and interpreting scripture), and Cornelius Plantinga's *Engaging God's World*. Donald Miller provides an engaging approach to the worldview topic in his book, *Searching for God Knows What*. I have used Donald Miller's book with thirty-something adults who found it to be a helpful and personable introduction to the topic of Worldview-Story biblical theology. These sources are noted in the bibliography.

recognize that sin is the common lot of all humanity. By framing and sharing their stories in community, men and women grow in their understanding of one another and deepen their vulnerability and mutuality in community.

The third step is training leaders in group spiritual direction.<sup>6</sup> This particular skill can be included when learning the biblical worldview narrative, especially as men and women share their stories and seek to pay attention to the movement of God in the midst of their stories. By training men and women to listen and ask meaningful questions, each leader is given a means to grow in greater awareness of self and greater awareness of God. By answering the questions in community, men and women cultivate intimacy first with God, and secondly with one another.

When creating a curriculum to coincide with the spiritual formation model, my goal is to create meaningful and reflective questions that guide the participants to explore their stories, and the movement of God in their lives, through group spiritual direction. Each leader is to reflect on the questions prior to gathering with their group. During group spiritual direction, the members of the group are to not only listen well to each individual's thoughtful engagement with the materials but also to ask meaningful questions that guide them to be aware of God and themselves more fully as they engage the material. I have worked with group spiritual direction in the past. It is my experience that those who participate in group spiritual direction grow in self-awareness and self-differentiation, and feel loved in deeper ways as others listen to their stories without

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<sup>6</sup> The best practical resource available for group spiritual direction training is Alice Fryling's book *Seeking God Together*. I have personally used this to train others in the practice of group spiritual direction. It is easy to understand and provides practical insight and instruction on forming and developing groups. This book is referenced in the Bibliography.

giving advice, counsel, or instruction. The dynamic of group spiritual direction affords the participant the experience of feeling deeply loved and accepted.

While there are three steps to the formation process, the experience of love, acceptance and belonging is the outcome of the process. I have used this spiritual formation model with women through *Restoring Eve: A Ministry of Spiritual Formation for Women Leaders*. The outcome of this type of formation model in the lives of women leaders is that they have a deep sense of feeling loved by God and by others in the group, and feel known at a deep level for the very first time.

### **Other Considerations**

Because evangelical churches have predominantly formed the identity of men and women separately, the following considerations are given to suggest alternative ways of implementing this material. I also offer suggestions for leader participation and leadership training, especially since the practices suggested in this thesis may be unfamiliar to one's current church leadership environment and culture.

#### *Identity Formation of Men and Women Separately*

Because many within the evangelical culture have not experienced intentional identity formation in community, some consideration may need to be given to whether or not it is beneficial to form the gender identity of men and women separate from each other before joining them together in community. While this approach is not the goal of this thesis, it does allow for transition within a culture that has formed the identity of men and women separately for a long time. To have men hear men and women hear women, they may then be more ready to share more intimately of their own lives and stories when



in mixed-gender communities. While mutuality, self-differentiation, vulnerability, and love need to be cultivated in mixed-gender community, having men and women take their first steps of vulnerability in same-gender community may be a necessary step for some leaders.

As was noted in Chapter 6, Miroslav Volf recognizes this stance.<sup>7</sup> To have men and women leaders to engage in same gender identity formation before entering a mixed-gender community, may aid in their growth in wholeness and provide opportunity to hear those of the same gender address personal needs and concerns, possibly for the very first time. Volf recognizes that at times, the identity of women often feel threatened, especially having experienced the implications of hierarchy and power in identity formation and mixed-gender relationships. Because of this, Volf says women may need to engage in “boundary maintenance” and “identity formation” in same-gender community. In the same way, in a society that offers confusing messages on manhood and masculinity, especially in the decline of patriarchy, men may need same gender conversation as they navigate questions about their own gender identity.

It would be up to each individual formation community to determine the best way to engage the information in their particular context. What is important is that men and women do not *remain* separated in identity formation. The ultimate goal of identity formation in *same* gender community is to have men and women come back together in *mixed*-gender identity formation. The goal of this thesis is difficult, if not impossible to accomplish without engaging identity formation via an intentional spiritual formation model in mixed-gender community. Volf concurs, as was noted previously in Chapter 6,

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<sup>7</sup> Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1996), 185.

and recognizes that gender identity is ultimately a negotiation between men and women in relationship with one another.<sup>8</sup>

The spiritual formation model presented in Chapter 7 can be adapted to identity formation between participants of the same sex. While the biblical story of mutuality is suitable for both sexes, practical gender identity formation questions and information could be adapted to suit either men or women. All other aspects of the spiritual formation model can be implemented as described in same sex identity formation leadership communities.

### *Leader Participation*

The focus of this thesis is identity formation in leadership community. It is the recommendation of this author that leadership community include all levels of leadership within an organization in order for the spiritual formation model to be most effective. As was noted in Chapter 6, it is leadership at a supervisory level that has the most impact on organizational culture in a business organization. Also, within churches and ministry organizations, senior leadership can have the tendency to be the most distant from their subordinates and even distant from their peers. In order for identity formation in spiritual formation community to have the greatest impact on a ministry organization and its leaders, it is important for all leaders to participate in the formation community. Otherwise, confusion ensues within an organization.

My own experience in using an identity formation model with leaders is, that without senior leadership support, the process only affects those who directly participate. It does not end up influencing organizational culture. While the spiritual formation

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<sup>8</sup> Volf, 186.

process provides a positive impact on identity formation for those who engage the process, it can also lead to frustration due to the lack of change or openness to change in the entire organization. While my work, prior to this thesis, has been predominantly with women leaders and the identity formation of women leaders, the observed outcome is also translatable to what could happen if identity formation in mixed-gender community does not happen throughout the entire leadership culture, shaping an organization's leadership identity and organizational culture.

### *Leader Training*

While a written curriculum would provide leaders with a structure to implement the formation model in community, many leaders have not had experiences with vulnerability in either same gender or mixed-gender community. The tendency for leaders to hide behind façades, as mentioned in Chapter 7, limits their ability to effectively and intimately engage in relationships and implement the spiritual formation model offered. It may be necessary to provide a safe community environment outside of one's own context to provide leaders with a guided opportunity for growth in vulnerability needed to effectively engage this process with their peers. It would also provide a context to experience and learn the other spiritual practices in community with others leaders.

By providing an opportunity for leaders to have vulnerability and mutuality modeled by leaders outside of their current context, leaders can experience community in a manner that they may not have experienced previously. This would allow them to grow in their own relationship skills and have a model for how to appropriately navigate new mixed-gender relationships in their own leadership context. My own experience with

women leaders demonstrated that many had not experienced intimacy and vulnerability in their own leadership settings. By not having had that experience, they were cautious to share among their peers, especially when sharing of their sin and brokenness. By having leaders who are more experienced in sharing their stories of brokenness in deep and intimate ways train others leaders in the spiritual formation model, they have the chance to be more successful when returning to their own environments.

Leadership training also connects leaders with more experienced leaders, giving opportunity for ongoing mentoring relationships. By having another who has gone before them, and who has more experience navigating some of the challenges and pitfalls of mixed-gender leadership communities, leaders can return to their own environments not only having been trained but also knowing that they have a mentor who will support them along the way. Mentoring relationships can enhance a leader's opportunity for success in his or her own environment.

In conclusion, identity formation in mixed-gender leadership community can change the way men and women lead in ministry. By creating an environment of mutuality, self-differentiation, vulnerability, and love, men and women can better understand what it means to display the image of God through community. Cultivating mixed-gender leadership community through an intentional spiritual formation model affords men and women the opportunity to experience and live the kind of relationships that change gender identity and leadership identity and influence organizational culture. The church can be a place of equality and reconciliation for men and women leaders. Mutuality can replace hierarchy. Self-differentiation can lead to healthy relationships and personal wholeness. Shame and fear can change to acceptance and belonging through

vulnerability. And love can win over power and control. Identity formation in leadership community is a positive step toward the transformation of men and women leaders. As men and women grow in love for one another, may they not only change the cultures in which they work and lead, but may they extend their influence to the cultures beyond their own environment, becoming advocates for health, wholeness, and mutuality in the world at large. In doing so, men and women leaders embody their identity, and display the love of God to the world through unity and love.

## APPENDIX A

Adele Calhoun in *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, offers concise and helpful definitions and descriptions for the practices of silence, solitude, and centering prayer. Her definitions are as follows:

1. *Silence* is a regenerative practice of attending and listening to God in quiet, without interruption and noise. Silence provides freedom from speaking as well as from listening to words or music.<sup>1</sup>

*Silence is a time to rest in God. Lean into God, trusting that being with him in silence will loosen your rootedness in the world and plant you by streams of living water. It can form your life even if it doesn't solve your life.*<sup>2</sup>

Silence can be practiced in the following way:

- Identify a time and place that is not filled with distraction and noise.
  - Spend increasing amounts of time in silence, beginning with 10 minutes each day and increasing in 5-minute increments until able to spend 30 minutes in silence.
  - Because our minds are often cluttered with many things, not mentally work on projects or think on things may be difficult. When mental distractions come, picture them as leaves on water, and allow them to float away. Training one's minds to remain present is a discipline that requires practice.
  - Continue to carry this practice throughout the day by doing activities (such as driving, exercise, house cleaning) without the distraction of noise. Allow it to be a time of attentiveness to God and self.
2. *Solitude* involves scheduling enough uninterrupted time in a distraction-free environment that you experience isolation and are alone with God. Solitude is a "container discipline" for the practice of other spiritual disciplines.<sup>3</sup>

*Solitude is a formative place because it gives God's Spirit time and space to do deep work. When no one is there to watch, judge and interpret what we say, the Spirit often brings us face to face with hidden motives and*

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<sup>1</sup> Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, *The Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 107.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

*compulsions...solitude with God was a way Jesus remained in touch with his true identity in God.*<sup>4</sup>

Solitude can be practiced in the following way:

- Choose time alone, with no one else present, and pay attention to one's inner voice and self when alone.
  - Take time to refrain from constant interaction with others, finding solace in the solitude.
  - Learn to be by oneself and away from constant activity and stimulation.
  - Learn to live life before God rather than always before other people.
3. *Centering Prayer* is a form of contemplative prayer where the pray-er seeks to quiet scattered thoughts and desires in the still center of Christ's presence.<sup>5</sup>

*Centering prayer allows for the recognition of thoughts and gently releases them into the hands of God. This form of prayer relies on the awareness that the Holy Spirit resides in the one who prays, connecting them heart to heart with God . . . In centering prayer the goal is to so dwell in Christ that the fruit of this dwelling begins to show up in your life.*<sup>6</sup>

Centering Prayer can be practiced in the following way:

- While similar to silence and solitude, the intent of centering prayer is to enter a time of silence and solitude with the intent of being aware of Christ's presence.
- One may use a prayer word during this time to help maintain attentiveness of Christ. Examples of words are: Jesus, Father, love or another word or phrase from scripture that allows one to remain focused on God.
- It is a time of resting in and waiting on God, recognizing God's presence with you.

Reference:

Calhoun, Adele Ahlberg. *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 207.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 208.

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