

The Making of Biblical Womanhood Discussion Questions

Pre-amble Questions

1. Overall impressions of the book (rate 1-10)?
2. What were some of the things you most appreciated? Feel free to share a quote.
3. What was something you struggled or disagreed with? Feel free to share a quote.

Chapter 1

4. Barr proposes that patriarchy in Scripture exists because of "the fall." What are the ramifications of this for the roles of women? When you think of the other commonly understood consequences of the fall (work being difficult, pain in childbirth, etc.), do we tend to live with those consequences, or do we try to overcome them?
5. Barr distinguishes between what is "prescriptive" in Scripture as opposed to what is "descriptive" in Scripture. When it comes to women's roles, how might we distinguish between what Scripture merely describes versus what it prescribes?
6. In Galatians 3 we are told that in Christ, "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male or female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus" ([Gal. 3:28], NRSV). Despite this, many Christians of the past have argued in favor of anti-Semitism and the institution of slavery. What similarities or differences exist in modern arguments for the continued submission of women to men?

Chapter 2

7. What passages regarding the roles of men and women have been the most difficult or challenging for you? Based on what you have read in this chapter, what do you think Paul was trying to accomplish in that passage?
8. If Paul was indeed subverting the Roman household codes rather than affirming them, then how does that change the relationship between Christian husbands and wives?
9. What translations of the Bible have you primarily used throughout your life? How do these translate the passages describing the roles of women, and what impact has this had on you?

Chapter 3

10. Which medieval woman's story do you find the most interesting and why?
11. How did the insistence on clerical celibacy impact the leadership roles available to women?
12. How are today's efforts to reframe and minimize the role of women in Church History similar to medieval attempts to do the same thing?

Chapter 4

13. How did the cultural shifts of the Reformation era lead to changes in the perception of women?
14. Why hasn't the Protestant emphasis on the priesthood of every believer led to greater opportunities for women to teach and exercise spiritual authority in more Protestant churches?

Chapter 5

15. When English translations use masculine pronouns for words that are gender-neutral in the original Greek and Hebrew, how could this affect the way women of faith view themselves? How could this affect the way men of faith view women?
16. Read 1 Timothy 3. Now reread it as it appears in the original Greek, removing occurrences of the word "man," changing "he" to "they," , changing the word "wife" to "woman," and changing the word "servant" to "deacon." If this is how you heard 1 Timothy 3 read your entire life, how might your views of men and women in church leadership be different?
17. As you have seen in this chapter, it is impossible to translate the Bible from one language to another without doing some interpretation to decide which English words should be used. Aside from becoming a scholar of Greek and Hebrew, what are some ways an English reader of the Bible can avoid being unconsciously influenced by these human interpretations of the text?

Chapter 6

18. In what ways are Christian girls and women made to feel responsible for the inappropriate sexual behavior and attitudes of boys and men?
19. How can we appreciate and celebrate the differences between men and women without lapsing into constricting rules and structures?
20. What traits and activities of women did Jesus recognize and encourage?

Chapter 7

21. What traits and activities of women did Jesus recognize and encourage?
22. Complementarian theology teaches that women are spiritually equal to men but simply have different roles. Do you think it is possible to restrict one group of people from leadership roles and still view them as equals? What are the historical precedents for this?
23. With both Jesus in relation to the father and women in relation to men, complementarians teach that there is a hi-erarchy where one is eternally subordinate to the other. In a situation where sin is not present (for example, in the Trinity, or in humans both before the Fall and in a glorified state), what need is there for a hierarchy?

Chapter 8

24. Since the same passages (from Paul) that are used to emphasize women's uniquely submissive role to men also speak of slaves staying submissive to their masters, how can we say the Bible clearly teaches the submission of women while denying that the Bible upholds slavery and racism?
25. If complementarian theology is the result of a desire to take Scripture seriously, why does it seem so different from the approaches of Jesus and Paul, which elevated women's status in the Christian community?