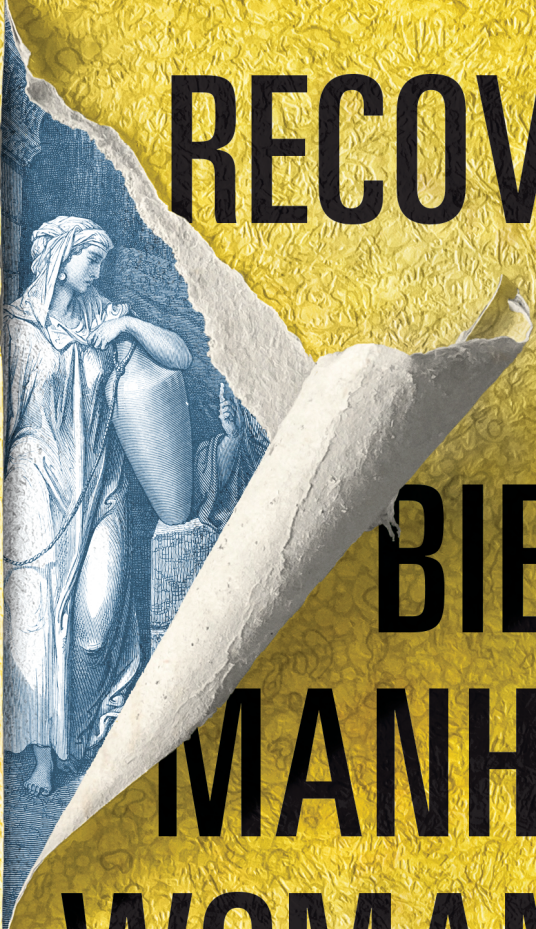


AIMEE BYRD



RECOVERING FROM BIBLICAL MANHOOD & WOMANHOOD

*How the Church Needs to
Rediscover Her Purpose*

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

WHY MEN AND WOMEN DON'T READ SEPARATE BIBLES

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. We customize our phones, our houses, our coffee, and our social media profiles. Do you find that your time reading Scripture throughout the week has become customized to your own taste, life circumstances, and needs? What types of resources do you use most to help you in studying Scripture?
2. Do you tend to read Christian books and Bible studies that are authored by someone who is the same sex as you? Why or why not?
3. What is the value of separate Christian resources aimed toward men and women? What is the value of men and women attending exclusive Bible study groups for their own sex?
4. What is the value of men and women learning together? What are we missing out on if we capitalize on the benefits from male-only and women-only studies at the exclusion of coed opportunities to learn together?
5. Although we are beginning with the study of the female voice in Scripture, more than half of the book will be on discipleship in the church, reading Scripture as a covenant community, and serving together as active traditioners of the faith. Why would it be beneficial even for men to study the female voice in Scripture?

WHY NOT THE BOOK OF BOAZ?

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. How do you think the version of this history would be told differently if we were reading the book of Boaz?
2. Gynocentric interruption might help us to consider differently what we would usually attribute as masculine concerns. In Ruth we see how ancient patrilineal genealogy, and all the legal red tape involved when an heir dies, is not only a patriarchal concern. Reread Ruth 4. You see this interplay of the male and female perspective at the end of Ruth when the men are discussing the legal structures at the gate and then when the birth of Ruth and Boaz's son, Obed, is described. What advantage do these legal structures give Ruth, a childless widow and a resident alien? What about for Naomi, a widow who already lost her childless sons? How does this bring light to how the legal conventions benefited the vulnerable ones in Israel?
3. What is a tradent? How might tradents be valuable to God's covenant people in antiquity and to the writers of Scripture? Why is this an important term when we discuss how the Bible was written, the process of recognizing the canon of Scripture, and the contribution of women?

4. I'm talking a lot about a female voice and a male voice, but is there a feminine or masculine way to study doctrine? For example, if your church were to offer a class on the Trinity, the properties of Scripture, sanctification, or eschatology, would there be a need to teach the women on these topics differently than the men? Would you need books written specifically for men and specifically for women on doctrine? Would men and women have different perspectives to share when it comes to how theology meets life? How would coed studies with active male and female contributions benefit discipling in the church? What is beneficial in also providing exclusive men's and exclusive women's studies?
5. Read the genealogy in Matthew 1. How does it differ from the genealogy in Ruth? Why is this significant to the reader?

GIRLS INTERRUPTED

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. James Boice asks a good question about the midwives in Exodus: “In those days, who would have paid any attention to these midwives?” And yet their names are recorded in Scripture instead of the pharaoh’s. Moses’s recording of the names of the midwives is really quite remarkable. Why do you think the Holy Spirit led him to do this? What contribution does their testimony give to the text?
2. Why would the “daughters of Israel” want to keep the memory of abuse to Jephthah’s daughter alive, so much so that they had yearly rituals to pass down their stories from generation to generation? Do you think this shows that God cared or did not care about these women? What would a person who is oppressed today learn from these women who kept their stories alive and from the scriptural record?
3. Read Hannah’s prayer in 1 Samuel 2:1–10 and Mary’s Magnificat in Luke 1:46–55. What similarities can you find between the two? Why do you think they are so similar? What do they teach us about God? What do they teach us about themselves? How is this different from popular stereotypes about women?

4. During a time when a woman's testimony was not trusted, God gives a woman the honor of being the first witness to Christ's resurrection as well as being the first to tell the news to the apostles. How did the apostles respond? After the ascension of Christ, did the apostles include the women in anything else significant? What does this say about their attitudes regarding the women's contributions under the ministry?
5. How does the female perspective enhance the accounts of the birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus?

WHY OUR AIM IS NOT BIBLICAL MANHOOD AND WOMANHOOD

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

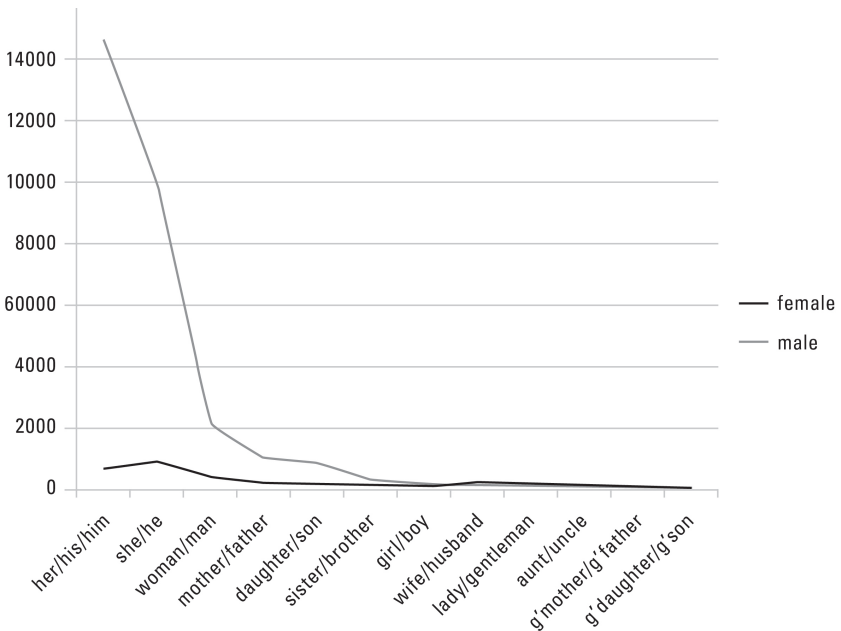
1. A false dichotomy has been offered to us: either we embrace the modern-day teaching on biblical manhood and womanhood (which looks a lot like a rebranded PG version of the ancient Greco-Roman model), or we irretrievably damage the church with vague, androgynous discipleship. We've seen descriptions of this biblical manhood and womanhood teaching in this chapter. What would vague, androgynous discipleship look like? Explain why this is a false dichotomy.
2. How would you describe mature masculinity and mature femininity? If Christ ultimately shows us what it means to be human, how does this affect our ideas of masculinity and femininity?
3. How can your church better uphold distinction between the sexes without reduction? What areas might be blind spots for you? How do our distinct relational responsibilities color our discipleship? How would cultural or class differences color our discipleship?
4. Name some examples of how women in your church are serving as necessary allies to the men in warning them to turn away from evil, acting as cobelligerents with men against evil enemies, mediating the Word of the Lord, giving wise instruction and counsel, collaborating in service to others, responding to God

as examples of faithfulness, and influencing men from a gift of empathy and relatedness. How can you facilitate this culture of coed labor better in your church?

5. What gender norms within our culture do you think are worth affirming? How might they help us to relate as men and women? Are they essential to being biblically faithful to our sexuality?

WHAT CHURCH IS FOR

Pastors' Use of Unnamed Women vs. Unnamed Men



Dr. Valerie Hobbs, senior lecturer in applied linguistics at the University of Sheffield. Used with permission.

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. How does the communication and communion in your church model a picture of the cosmos of the new heavens and the new earth?
2. Here is a text message I received on a Saturday evening last year: “We’re gonna go do something instead of church tomorrow. Got a bunch of preaching today at the memorial service.” How does this view of the church contrast with God’s summons to corporate worship? And how does this mind-set contrast with the way God has ordained to prepare us for eternity?
3. Do you think there is any correlation between the lack of women academics and teachers in conservative seminaries and Dr. Hobbs’s findings regarding the lack of women being addressed in preaching? Why or why not?
4. What are some practical ways in which your church leadership is already, or may need to begin, providing oven mitts to help laymen and laywomen take the pizza out of the oven?
5. In these things, are the women in your church utilized more as an extension of the male leadership, or as coworkers laboring side by side?

THE GREAT DIVORCE THAT YOU DIDN'T SEE COMING

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. What parachurch organizations and resources are popular among the members of your church? How can the leaders of the church help to implement these within the context of the church's responsibility to make disciples?
2. Is there a tendency in your church for laypeople to look to the parachurch for discipleship? Are there rogue disciple makers in your congregation? How can the leadership in the church be more intentional in their teaching to understand the church as the school of Christ? What are some ways to help your church to "define the relationship" between the church and the parachurch?
3. What does the common life and action look like in your church? What formal and informal teaching, learning, and serving opportunities are available as a fruit of the ministry of Word and sacrament? Would the church members describe your church as an active, outgoing household of believers? What valid reasons might they have to look elsewhere for discipleship?
4. What challenges, coming from both the secular culture and the theological questions or disputes within the church, need to be addressed by your church? How can Christ's teaching be rein-

troduced and applied in these areas? Who are some thoughtful and mature men and women in your church who can be invested in and equipped well to help teach in these areas?

5. Do the laypeople in your church have a good understanding of the Trinitarian and covenantal context in interpreting Scripture? How can the leaders help the laypeople to recognize how they fit into a proper pattern of authority as a priesthood of believers and how this helps them to interpret and communicate Scripture? How can church leaders connect this recognition with helping congregants discern their primary interpretive community, creeds and confessions of the church, and be discerning within the parachurch organizations and resources they use? How can church members sharpen one another with this understanding of reading as a communal enterprise?

IS THIS THE WAY IT WAS SUPPOSED TO BE?

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Consider the significance of Jesus saying that Mary is doing the one thing that is necessary. Do you urgently think this about women as disciples? How does it show in your church? Do you think of discipling women in any fractional capacity when compared to the contributions of male disciples? How so? How might the women in your church answer this question? Are they a whole, contributing part of the spiritual life of the church? Do they contribute literary expression and creativity? Are women in the heart of existence in your church? Are they vital to important tasks of passing on the heritage of the traditions to future generations? Do they serve in areas that identify with the knowledge of God's Word? Explain why or why not. How does this inclusion affect their public image?
2. Are there any services/ministries in the church that you think should be limited for only laymen or laywomen to serve in exclusively? Explain.
3. What would be the consequences in your church if the laywomen were invested in and serving in the same capacities as the laymen? What fears might you have here? Are they founded on biblical truth? What contemporary expectations of gender might your church be catering to?

4. What extra efforts does Paul make to include a woman's voice and contribution in the worship service in 1 Corinthians 11 and 14? Do the officers in your church make such efforts? How? What principles of distinction of the sexes did Paul uphold in 1 Corinthians 11—authority and submission, or cultural markers of sexuality and availability? If you hold cessationist convictions as I do, how do you think this detailed 1 Corinthians 11–14 description of a certain freedom under proper order in public worship applies to the church now, with the canon of Scripture complete, making the gifts of prophecy and tongues obsolete?
5. In considering the prophetic voice of the bride in Revelation 22 and even the first woman, Eve, expanding on Adam's words to reveal the story behind the story, how do you think the voice and contribution of women is distinctly meaningful and valuable in the church? How do you see it co-implicating the man's voice? What is dynamic about combining male and female voices and contributions?

WHEN PAUL PASSES PHOEBE THE BATON

QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Paul's most frequent way of describing the church is as siblings. What does this disclose about his ecclesiological and ethical thinking? One common argument that I hear when promoting the equipping of laywomen to serve as tradents in the church is that of the slippery slope: complementarian churches fear that this will lead to women's ordination. Another slippery slope fear is that gender "roles" will be reversed, and the next thing you know we will be sanctifying homosexual relationships. How does a biblical understanding of sibling relationships in the household of God combat this slippery slope argument—particularly teaching us how to value our relationships, defining what our rights and obligations are to one another, identifying distinctiveness between the sexes, and maintaining unity and harmony in God's household?
2. How does this understanding of siblingship affect the relationships between the clergy and the laypeople?
3. Does your church value women's theologizing as fundamental to the development of Christian thought? Why or why not? If your church upholds male-only ordination, does that squelch or promote the sisters in your congregation in communicating and communing in key responsibilities?

4. What do we do with this Junia/apostle passage now as a church in the twenty-first century? How does this designation of “apostle” translate for us—what principles can we take from it and apply to our churches?
5. Do you see any yellow wallpaper in your church? Where? I once read a study that revealed men answer much more positively about the condition of their marriage than women do, when asked. Make sure to ask the women in your church if they see any yellow wallpaper. Imagine you are a visitor to your church in answering this question: How does the female voice function in this congregation? What consequences do you foresee in peeling off the wallpaper?
6. Bonus question for complementarian churches: If there are no female teaching voices in seminary, how do we expect the pastors graduating *not* to shepherd a church with a distinctly male culture? If men and women are distinct sexes, how do we train pastors to preach for and shepherd both men *and* women in their congregations? How do we expect them to value the female voice if they are told they should not learn from them in seminary?