

## Empirical Data in Support of Egalitarian Marriages and A Fresh Perspective on Submission and Authority

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(San Diego, California)

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## In regard to: Empirical Data in Support of Egalitarian Marriages and A Fresh Perspective on Submission and Authority

Article by Dennis J. Preato  
Comments by Laura Lee (Bismarck, North Dakota)

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## Empirical Data in Support of Egalitarian Marriages and A Fresh Perspective on Submission and Authority (Copyright) by Dennis J. Preato (San Diego, California)

There is a serious problem with the institution of marriage in the USA. Many marriages, and particularly Christian marriages, don't seem to last. They fall short of God's ideal that marriage should be permanent as long as the two partners live. A 2001 national study conducted by Barna Research Group highlights this reality. The chart below summarizes divorce rates among various Christian church denominations.[1] Barna says that 33 percent of born-again adult Christians have experienced a divorce. That statistic is comparable to non-born-again adults. Also "more than 90% of the born-again adults who have been divorced experienced that divorce after they accepted Christ, not before." [2]

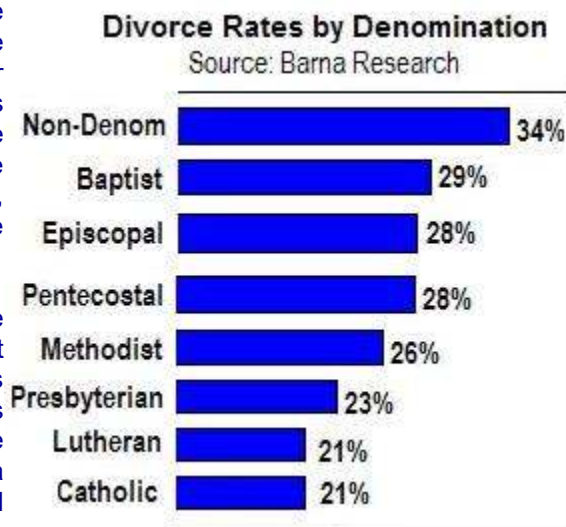
According to Barna, these results raise "questions regarding the effectiveness of how churches minister to families." It challenges "the idea that churches provide truly practical and life-changing support for marriage." [3] Dallas therapist Dr. Roy Austin agrees with Barna's findings. He states that fundamentalist or evangelical couples base their marriages on "very irrational and unrealistic principles," and he adds that problems occur when some men, as head of the household, become "cruel dictators" who "expect their wives to become servants." [4]

By religion, Jewish and born-again Christians have the highest divorce rates at 30% and 27% respectively, followed by other Christians at 24%. [5] Even more revealing and disturbing is the finding that atheists and agnostics have the lowest incidence of divorce at 21%. Why is this? Spokesperson Ron Barrier for American Atheists offers some reasons why he thinks this is so. He says, "Atheist ethics are of a higher caliber than religious morals," and "with Atheism, women and men are equally responsible for a healthy marriage. There is no room in Atheist ethics for the type of 'submissive' nonsense preached by Baptists and other Christian and/or Jewish groups. Atheists reject, and rightly so, the primitive patriarchal attitudes so prevalent in many religions with respect to marriage." [6]

This paper maintains that the permanency of marriage is God's intended will; therefore, churches have an ethical responsibility to promote healthy marriages that are best achieved by presenting the empirically supported egalitarian model. To fulfill this responsibility churches must have a clear understanding of the Scriptural basis that permanency of marriage is God's will. Beyond this, they must recognize the social, economic, and ethical implications of promoting healthy marriages. Churches can benefit from exploring existing empirical data on marriage and the input of professional marriage and family therapists. Finally, churches need a fresh perspective on submission and authority in general and in marriages in particular.

### Permanency of Marriage Is God's Will Old Testament Basis

In Genesis 2:24, the man leaves his father and mother and clings or cleaves to his wife. To cling or cleave means to be faithfully devoted to as in *But you are to cling to the Lord your God* (Jos. 23.8). The word cleave is an old English word meaning keeping the troth. This means that the husband and wife are to count on each other, give their utmost, share deeply from inside, and stick together through thick and thin. [7] Thus marriage is viewed as a lifelong commitment where the two become one flesh. They share an intimate relationship based on love, fidelity, mutual respect and trust. Marriage is also viewed as a lasting covenant relationship. The prophet Malachi warns the husband not to be *faithless to the wife of his youth as she is your companion and your wife by covenant* (Mal. 2.14). According to God, marriage is intended to endure: *For I hate divorce says the LORD, the God of Israel* (Mal. 2:16).



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**New Testament Basis**

In Matthew 19:4-6, Jesus responds to a question from the Pharisees regarding the circumstances under which a man can divorce his wife. After quoting Gen. 1:27 and Gen. 2:24, Jesus states: *Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate* (Matt.19.6; Mark 10:9). Christ is stating that it is God's intention that marriage is to be a lasting covenant and that God does not approve of divorce. Scripture uses marriage as a metaphor to illustrate the relationship between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:23; 31-32). In this regard, marriage is viewed as an inseparable union. In 1 Corinthians 7, the apostle Paul provides advice concerning the authority that each marriage partner has over the other's body (vv. 3-4) and that a Christian couple should not divorce (vv. 10-11). Also, the writer of Hebrews states: *Let marriage be held in honor by all and let the marriage bed be kept undefiled* (Heb. 13:4). To be held in honor means that marriage is viewed as precious, valuable, of great worth, highly respected, and priceless. Both Testaments emphasize that marriage is a lifelong commitment which is valued by the entire community.

While permanency of marriage is God's will, there are cases in which divorce is justified. For example, in Matthew 19.9 Christ appears to give immorality or being unfaithful as a valid reason for divorce, however, other reasons may exist. Physically abusive behavior leading to injury of the spouse or children is a valid reason for divorce particularly when such behavior continues with no indication of a willingness to change. Whenever a marriage breaks down beyond any hope of restoration, churches should respond in the spirit of grace and forgiveness.

**Reasons To Promote Equality in Marriages**

Apart from Scripture, there are social, economic, and ethical reasons why churches should be involved in promoting marriages based on equality. For example, marriage carries with it certain legal ramifications, rights, and obligations under our present judicial system. When marriages fail, there are emotional and monetary costs. This impacts not only the individuals involved and any dependent children but also affects the body of Christ and society at large.

Statistically about half of all those who currently marry can be predicted to divorce within seven years. Approximately 60% of marriages experience stress and high levels of dissatisfaction in their first year of marriage.[8] Divorce has significant detrimental effects on a child's performance in school including emotional or behavioral problems and an increased risk of accidental injury and poisoning.[9]

Sexual and physical abuse is prevalent in our society and Christian marriages are no exception. This abuse can occur in any marriage. For example, one pastor tells how a Christian woman felt obligated to obey her husband "by engaging in sex with him and another woman at the same time." Obviously for her being in God's will meant being submissive to her husband. The pastor counseled that she should have disobeyed her husband; but that she was to still remain under his authority.[10] Not understanding what biblical submission really means brings great pain and suffering to Christian relationships, marriages and to women in particular.

Churches have ample reasons to encourage marriages based on equality. These marriages benefit all family members and the body of Christ. Promoting healthy relationships and eliminating unhealthy attitudes about marriages should be a top priority. But what do healthy marriage relationships look like? Where do we find the answer? Marriage is defined from two divergent theological viewpoints.

**Defining Marriage Relationships: Egalitarian vs. Traditional**

*The New Dictionary of Christian Ethics and Pastoral Theology* defines marriage as a co-partnership of equality where "neither may lord it over the other." [11] This represents an egalitarian view of marriage. Egalitarian marriages are described as mutual partnerships without forced roles and characterized by a high degree of intimacy. In contrast, a traditional hierarchical view of marriage has distinct roles with the husband on top in authority over the wife.

Traditionalists claim their view "should find an echo in every human heart." [12] The root problem in marriage, they say, "is the unwillingness of each to accept the role for which he or she was designed." [13] If these traditionalists' statement were true, then marriages based on hierarchical relationships should be the happiest and most intimate of all marriages and have the lowest divorce rate. Yet born-again evangelical Christians have the highest divorce rate.

Both views of marriage have been argued by scholars from a biblical perspective for years and this debate will probably continue into the future. However, the relevant and immediate issue for the church and the parties involved is recognizing which relationship results in a happier, healthier, more intimate, meaningful long term, and permanent marriage. Isn't

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this what God really desires for our lives? What's missing? Discovering this key represents both a challenge and an opportunity for the church. Churches will need to move outside their comfort zone, examine the evidence, and implement change.

### **Review of Empirical Marriage Data**

Promoting healthy marriages will require that churches look beyond their limited and somewhat biased understanding of how marriages should function and discover how healthy marriages really function in our society. Professionals who work within the field of marriage and family therapy, sociologists, researchers, and demographers provide this necessary insight and empirical research data.

**Dr. Howard Clinebell**, Professor Emeritus of Pastoral Psychology and Counseling, Claremont School of Theology, and author of *Basic Types of Pastoral Care & Counseling*, characterizes a healthy marriage as one evidenced by mutual care and support that allows for the growth and fulfillment of each person's God-given potentialities. Clinebell writes in 1984 that based on personal experience he and his wife, Dr. Charlotte Ellen, "can attest to the fact that an egalitarian marriage is potentially more fulfilling for the woman and the man." [14] Conversely, sexism Clinebell states, "is a central cause of diminished and destructive marriages." [15]

**Drs. Alan Booth and Paul Amato**, Penn State sociologists and demographers agree that egalitarian marriages are happier. They interviewed and followed the lives of two thousand men and women and some of their children over a 20-year period between 1980 and 2000. The subject individuals were personally contacted six times each year during the twenty-year study. In the year 2000, at the conclusion of their twenty-year study, the research team interviewed an entirely new random sample of 2,100 married couples. Amato explains, "So we can look at two different kinds of changes: how individual marriages change over time, and how the population of married couples has changed between 1980 and 2000." Dr. Amato makes this conclusion: *Equality is good for a marriage. It's good for both husbands and wives. If the wife goes from a patriarchal marriage to an egalitarian one, she'll be much happier, much less likely to look for a way out. And in the long run, the husbands are happier too.* While some traditionalists may argue that working wives cause divorce, Dr. Booth refutes this notion. Based on the results of this long study he says emphatically that "women working does not cause divorce." [16]

**Dr. David H. Olson**, Professor Emeritus, Family Social Science, University of Minnesota, compiled a national survey based on 21,501 married couples using a comprehensive marital assessment tool called ENRICH. This national survey, published in the year 2000, represents one of the largest and most comprehensive analyses of marital strengths and stumbling blocks. Couples were asked to complete 30 background questions and 165 specific questions that focused on 20 significant marital issues. This survey identified the top ten strengths of happy marriages and the top ten stumbling blocks for married couples. This data is summarized in the attached Appendix. Using these top ten strengths, it is possible to discriminate between happy and unhappy marriages with 93% accuracy.



A significant discovery was made in relation to marital satisfaction and role relationships. **It discovered that (81%) of equalitarian (egalitarian) couples were happily married, while (82%) of couples where both spouses perceived their relationship as traditional (hierarchical) were mainly unhappy.** [17]

This means that only 18% of traditional marriages were reported as happy. In relation to intimacy 98% of happy couples feel very close to each other, while only 27% of unhappy couples felt the same. The inability to share leadership equally (couple inflexibility) was the top stumbling block to a happy marriage.

**Drs. David H. Olson and Shuji G. Asai** of the University of Minnesota, published a survey on spouse abuse in 2003. This study examined spousal abuse dynamics using data from a national sample of 20,951 married couples that took the ENRICH couple inventory during 1998-1999. A clear association was found between the marital health of the couples and the level of abuse. For example, vitalized couples, that is, couples with the highest level of satisfaction, had the lowest incidence of abuse at 5%.

Traditional couple types experienced spousal abuse in 21% of marriages, a rate more than four times higher than in

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vitalized marriages.[18] This study confirms what has been known by many marriage and family therapy professionals. That higher marital abuse exists in traditional marriages in comparison to equal or egalitarian marriages.

**Dr. Diana R. Garland**, Professor and Chair of the School of Social Work and Director of the Center for Family and Community Ministries at Baylor University, discusses marriage relationships in her book, *Family Ministry: A Comprehensive Guide*. She points out that research conducted in the mid-twentieth century revealed the following:

Wives, in traditional marriages, suffered significantly more depression and other mental disorders than men, working married women and unmarried women (Bernard 1982).

In traditional marriages, wives had been beaten at "a rate of more than 300 percent higher than for egalitarian marriages (Straus, Gelles and Steinmetz 1980)."

Violence is more likely to occur in homes where the husband has all the power and makes all the decisions than in homes where spouses share decision making (L. Walker 1979).

Garland cites numerous research studies since the 1950s that have "consistently revealed that egalitarian couples have more satisfying marriages than traditional marriages (Bean, Curtis and Marcum 1977; Blood and Wolfe 1960; Centers, Raven and Rodrigues 1971; Locke and Karlsson 1952; Michel 1967)."[19]

**Drs. Pepper Schwartz and Philip Blumstein**, University of Washington sociologists published the results of a decade long research study in 1983. Their extensive survey of 15,000 American couples revealed that "equality and shared power" significantly contributed to happiness and was the reason couples chose to stay married. Conversely, "the inequality experienced by women was a primary cause of unhappiness leading to the breakup of marriages." [20]

**Ashton Applewhite**, author of *Cutting Loose: Why Women Who End Their Marriages Do So Well* addresses the personal and sociopolitical aspects of marriage. Citing a 1995 survey of 4,000 women, she notes that women in egalitarian marriages are by far the happiest. Stephanie von Hirschberg senior editor of the *New Woman Survey* writes that shared power and responsibility "seems to be crucial to a woman's happiness in marriage." [21]

### **Summary of Empirical Marriage Data**

Extensive studies and research have been performed by marriage and family professionals, sociologists, and demographers. Over the last 50 years these studies reveal that significant numbers of egalitarian marriages are happy in comparison to traditional hierarchical marriages. A recent study quantified these results revealing that over 80% of egalitarian marriages are happy while less than 20% of traditional marriages can say the same. That represents over a 4:1 ratio in favor of egalitarian marriages. Spousal abuse continues to be more than 300 percent higher in traditional marriages than in egalitarian marriages.

These research studies accomplish the following: First, they effectively discredit any traditionalists' notion that dismantling hierarchy destabilizes marriage and that the root problem in marriage is the unwillingness of each spouse to accept the role for which he or she was designed. Second, they prove that hierarchy actually destabilizes and harms marriages. Third, they provide objective data that egalitarian marriages produce the healthiest, happiest, most intimate, and stable of all marriage relationships with the least amount of spousal abuse.

### **A Fresh Perspective on Submission and Authority**

As these research studies and surveys consistently indicate, the primary problem in marital happiness centers around equality, shared power, and leadership issues. Additionally, the divorce statistics, as Barna points out, question the notion that churches properly support or effectively minister to married couples. These issues should force us to reexamine our understanding of certain long held beliefs about marriage. These beliefs relate directly to the biblical concepts of submission and authority in general and in marriages in particular. Misconceptions about these subjects are harmful to the body of Christ and to marital relationships.

### **Submission: What Does It Mean?**

Submitting yourselves to one another out of reverence for Christ (Eph. 5:21) represents a horizontal interaction that takes place between believers. It is difficult to comprehend and live out. Why? Because I believe "submission" is often



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misunderstood and misapplied. First of all submitting is not a command. Submission is passive in nature and results only within the context of being continually filled (saturated) with the Holy Spirit (Eph. 5:18). Second, submission is mutual and applicable to all believers in Christ (Eph. 5:21). This means that submission applies to both husbands and wives equally (Eph. 5:22). Third, submission is not something you do but is something you receive. It is not an action to be attained but an attitude of the heart to be maintained.

The Greek word, *hupotasso*, is often translated as "submitting to" or "being subject" in Ephesians 5:22. However this Greek word has more than one use and a range of meaning that is quite different from what people today generally think. "*Hupotasso*" actually has two uses: military and non-military. The military has a connotation of being "subject to" or "to obey" as if you are under someone's command. Most people would probably think of this meaning. However the non-military use means "a voluntary attitude of giving in, cooperating, assuming responsibility, and carrying a burden".[21(a)] In ancient papyri the word *hupotasso* commonly meant to "support," "append," or "uphold." [22]

Some Bible translations recognize that *hupotasso* has more than one use. For example: The Message Bible translates Eph. 5:21 as be courteously reverent. The New Century Version translates *hupotasso* as "cooperate" rather than "submission" in 1 Tim. 2:11 and 3:4). Andrew and Judith Lester, authors of *It Takes Two: The Joy of Intimate Marriage* suggest a better translation is "be supportive of," "tend to the needs of," or "respect the needs and desires of." [23]

In the context of Ephesians 5:18-23, Christians are cooperating, supporting, upholding, and respecting one another as one result of being filled with the Holy Spirit. Doesn't that make sense? And here are some compelling reasons. First, verse 21 states the reason: *because of our reverence for Christ*. Christ is our example. Did Jesus Christ come as a military commander to rule and give orders over his Church? No! In fact, Christ warns us not to exercise authority over anyone (Matt. 20:25-27; Luke 22:25-27). Jesus came as a servant to give his life for us. Second, maintaining a *mutual attitude of cooperation and support* reduces disunity and promotes harmony in the Church. This is how the body of Christ is supposed to relate to one another. And that fulfills God's desire for us to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3) and in our marriages as well. Also, the church is referred to as the body of Christ. Picture the physical body. How do the various members, the hand, brain, heart, lungs, feet work? They cooperate and work together to support the entire system. In the same way, we as members of the body of Christ, both need and must support one another. Third, why would Scripture need to command Christians to be filled with the Spirit in order to be subject to, follow orders, or be under someone's authority. A person does not need to be filled with Spirit to follow orders for even nonbelievers demonstrate this fact when they "submit," or obey their superiors.

The phrase: **Wives, to you own husband, as to the Lord** (Eph. 5:22) expands this relationship of mutual support to include the marriage relationship. Unfortunately, bible translators elect to present verse 22 as a new sentence with an added verbal command such as: *Wives, be subject* (NRSV, NASB, REB); *submit* (NIV, NKJV); *submit yourselves* (DNT, KJV, ISV); *yeild* (NCV); *will submit* (NLT); *must submit* (TLB) *to your own husbands, as to the Lord*. This is regrettable because there is no verb in the Greek text. No command is given that wives are to submit to their husbands. Only a few translations use italics or brackets as a way to indicate that the words be subject etc. are not found in the Greek manuscripts. In addition, verse 22 is not even a separate sentence. It is a phrase, a continuation of verse 21, that must be understood in light of the context of verses 18-23 which is really one long sentence in the Greek.[24]

Wives or husbands are not commanded to submit, be ruled or dominated by their spouses. Both are meant to cooperate and support one another in the spirit of love and unity. Marriages based on egalitarian concepts of equality, shared power and leadership are the happiest of all marriages. The research independently affirms these marriages and supports the egalitarian view of Scripture.

We should also remember the culture and law of that day gave men supreme control of their entire household. Women had no rights and were under the authority of either their father or their husband. The apostle Paul is not advocating nor is he repeating this cultural reality. What Paul is presenting is the results of being filled with the Spirit and this result produces a counter cultural transformation in the lives of believers. Christians are now to cooperate and support one another regardless of the class, race or gender prejudices that permeated the culture in which they lived.

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**Does the Kephale "Head" Metaphor Mean Authority?**

Some people abuse or misconstrue the concept of authority. Traditionalists claim that because the man or husband is referred to as the "head" of a woman or his wife means that he is "in charge" over her (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:23). They miss the whole point that husbands are commanded to love their wives sacrificially (Eph. 5:25). Husbands are not commanded to be in authority over their wives. Even the early Greek Church exegetes and theologians tell us that the "head" (*kephale*) metaphor means "source of life, origin," not authority. Here are some examples:

**Cyril**, Bishop of Alexandria (A.D. 376-444) commenting on 1 Cor. 11:3 defines the head metaphor as source: *Thus we say that the kephaleo of every man is Christ, because he was excellently made through him. And the kephaleo of woman is man because she was taken from his flesh. Likewise the kephaleo of Christ is God, because he is from him according to nature.*[25]

**Theodore**, Bishop of Mopsuestia in Cilicia (A.D. 350-428) interprets the metaphor as "source or origin of life" He "held that just as Christ was considered head of all who had been born anew in Him, so the woman has man as her head 'since she had taken her being from him.'"[26]

**John Chrysostom**, Bishop of Constantinople (A.D. 347-407) commenting on 1 Cor.11:3 said the head metaphor does not mean that one has authority over another or one is under subjection to another. Dr. Joe E. Trull, editor of *Christian Ethics Today*, quotes Chrysostom: *"If you think 'head' means 'chief' or 'boss,' you skew the godhead!"*[27] Dr. Catherine Clark Kroeger, adjunct Professor of Classical and Ministry Studies at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, confirms that Chrysostom interprets the metaphor to mean "source" or "point of origin" and declared as a heretic anyone who proclaimed that "head" in this context denoted superior power or authority![28]

In critiquing Dr. Kroeger's article on "Head", Dr. Wayne Grudem, a traditionalists and Research Professor of Bible and Theology at Phoenix Seminary, says: "Concerns will also be raised about the level of care and accuracy with which evidence has been quoted" and that "the article is troubling at its core, not only for what it claims, but for the model of scholarly work that it puts forth.[29] Grudem says: "But Chrysostom does not say this all. Rather he assumes that *kephale* does mean 'authority over.'"[30] Grudem further claims that Chrysostom agrees with the heretics that *kephale* means "authority over" because "the Son is obedient to the Father" and "is also subject to the Father." [31] Grudem totally misrepresents what Chrysostom actually said and meant! He bases his argument on pure assumptions. If anyone is guilty of exhibiting a lack of scholastic integrity it is Grudem alone, not Dr. Kroeger. Grudem fails to include specific comments that prove Chrysostom does not agree with the heretics' claims that Christ is "under subjection." For example:

Chrysostom, in his homily on 1 Cor. 11:2ff, quotes the heretics as saying: "Nay," say they, "it is not His being of another substance which we intend to show from hence, but that He is under subjection." [32] While Grudem quotes this verse he fails to disclose how Chrysostom ridicules the heretics with these words: "Tell me, how thou intendest to prove this from the passage [v.3]?" [33] Chrysostom goes on at length refuting the heretic's notion that Christ is under subjection to the Father by saying: "And who could ever admit this?" . . . "many absurdities will follow" . . . And who will endure this?" [34]

Chrysostom also clearly states that the term "head" must be understood "according to the occasion." Grudem fails to mention this fact nor does he disclose that Chrysostom made the following statement demonstrating that "head" *does not* mean authority over another. Chrysostom said: *For had Paul meant to speak of rule and subjection, as thou sayest, he would not have brought forward the instance of a wife, but rather of a slave and a master.* [35]

In the same homily, Chrysostom also refutes the heretics' claim, just as the traditionalists (complementarians) claim today, that "Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin." [36] Chrysostom contradicts their claim by saying: *She was not subjected as soon as she was made; nor when He brought her to the man, did either she hear any such thing from God, nor did the man say any such word to her; he said indeed that she was 'bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh:' (Gen. 2:23) but of rule or subjection he nowhere mentions unto her.*

After the Fall, Chrysostom said of her future: *"thy turning shall be to thy husband"* (Gen. 3.16). [37] Notice that Chrysostom did not translate this Greek phrase as your desire will be for your husband, as most modern Bibles do. The emphasis and significance of turning means that "Eve is turning away from God to her husband, and, as a consequence of that

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deflection, Adam will rule over her." [38] Chrysostom clearly states that the subordination of women occurred as a result of the Fall. However, this condition no longer exists for it was lifted as a result of the atoning work of Jesus Christ who has redeemed us from the curse of the Law (Gal 3:13).

Chrysostom's homily is delivered as an interpretation of Paul's letter to the Corinthians in the context of the first century. He is not making a statement or defining "head" only in the context of the fourth century as Wayne Grudem asserts but is clarifying that Christ is not subordinate to the Father. Nor is Jesus Christ eternally subordinate to the Father as Grudem claims. [39] Furthermore, Chrysostom's comments regarding "head," "subjection," and the effects of the Fall are remarkable especially when one considers that he was no egalitarian, and from the very earliest times the attitude of the "church fathers" toward women could hardly be described favorable.

**Jesus Christ** is our example. Scripture helps us to define the word "head" in a well-known passage about Christ. New Testament passages speak of the stone which the builders rejected. Christ has become the *kephale gonía* (Matt. 21:42, Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; 1 Peter 2:7). This Greek expression is translated in various Bibles as the "head of the corner," "the cornerstone" or "chief cornerstone." A cornerstone was the most important stone and was placed at the foundation of a building. It was the stone upon which all other stones were placed. In this sense, Jesus Christ is the beginning of all things, the first, the origin, our source of life.

Jesus also voluntarily laid down his life that we might obtain eternal life. And in doing so, Christ became the *kephale* "source of life" of the Church, (Eph. 5:23; Col. 1:18). Being obedient unto death does not, as some traditionalists claim, mean that Jesus Christ is eternally subordinate to the Father. Speaking about His death, Christ said: *I lay it down of My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again* (John 10:18). Remember, Jesus was fully God and fully man. He came for the express purpose of redeeming humanity. His act of surrender and dying on the cross in no way implies that He is somehow subordinate to God, the Father. Scripture and the early church fathers make this abundantly clear.

#### **Authority: Who Really Has It?**

Scripture tells us that both husband and wife have "*exousiázo*," meaning "authority" over each other. In fact, the only place Scripture uses the common Greek word meaning authority "*exousia*" in relation to a husband and wife is found in 1 Corinthians 7:4. This deals with the couple's sexual responsibility to each other.

Furthermore, one could argue that the wife is the real "master" of the home since she is to "*oikodespotein*." Wives are the ones who are to actively "*manage their homes*" or "*the household*" (1 Timothy 5:14 ISV, NCV, NIV, NKJV, NRSV). She is to "*rule the house*" (AVS, DBY). The Greek verb "*oikodespoteo*" is one of the strongest terms used to express exercising authority in relation to the home. It literally means "to be master (or head) of the house; to rule a household, manage family affairs" (*Thayers Greek Lexicon* #3616-17). The noun *oikodespotes* is variously translated either as "master," "owner," "head of the house," or "head of the household" (Matt. 21:33, 24:43; Luke 12:39, 13:25, 14:21). Thus Scripture is really affirming that wives "rule" the home. They are the house-despots!

Christians should remember that the real spiritual "head" of the home is Jesus Christ alone, in whom all authority rests (Matt. 28:18). The point is that *marriage was never meant to be a struggle over power or who is "in charge."* Rather, the male and female are meant to exist in a covenant commitment in which the "two become one" through mutual love and support (*hupotasso*).

#### **Implications for Church and Society**

Dr. Clinebell notes that in our educational process children need to be raised free of sexism. [40] This should be a goal for all churches as well. Churches need to realize that healthy marriages do not happen in a vacuum. Developing healthy relationships is dependent on having a proper attitude and respect for members of the opposite sex. This process begins at an early age. Churches can implement educational and participatory opportunities where members are able to develop free from class, gender, or racial prejudices. These principles benefit everyone: those who marry and those who remain single.

#### **Concluding Remarks**

What a great injustice and tragedy that so many Christian marriages end in divorce and many who remain together live in unhappy marriages. Numerous reasons are offered: some blame "no fault" divorce, economics, and stress from living



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and coping in a materialistic society. People point fingers at something or someone else. Yet the root cause is always sin and deception.

Churches can become a motivating force for change. They have a responsibility to promote healthy marital relationships. Strong and healthy marriages are built on loving and equal relationships. Marriage relationships grow best and flourish within the context of egalitarian ideals. Extensive empirical data has demonstrated this reality. Theologians may continue to debate this reality, but the people have already spoken. Christians should hear what the Holy Spirit is saying and live in the full redemptive life of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

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See Dennis J. Preato's other articles at:

[Preato, Dennis J. – Church of God, Bismarck \(church-of-god-bismarck.org\)](http://church-of-god-bismarck.org)

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## Iron Sharpening Iron

New American Standard Bible (Proverbs 27:17)

As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.

## In regard to: Empirical Data in Support of Egalitarian Marriages and A Fresh Perspective on Submission and Authority

Article by Dennis J. Preato

Comments by Laura Lee (Bismarck, North Dakota)

### From the article:

Chrysostom clearly states that the subordination of women occurred as a result of the Fall. However, this condition no longer exists for it was lifted as a result of the atoning work of Jesus Christ who has *redeemed us from the curse of the Law (Gal 3:13)*.

**Gen 3:16** Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire *shall be* to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

**Gal 3:13** Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed *is* every one that hangeth on a tree:

First of all, Gen. 3:16 is not a law (command). It is a result of sin. Before the fall Adam and Eve were equal partners but that changed when they committed a sin by eating from a tree that God commanded them not to eat of.

The curse of the law referred to in Gal. 3:13 was death. The penalty for sin is death and Christ died for all of us in order to take the death penalty away so we can live through eternity if we repent and want to live God's way.

The Gen. 3:16 scripture is still in effect today and won't change any until Christ returns and establishes the Kingdom of God.

Many people seem to believe that Christ died so no one would have to keep the law anymore. All that does is make for lazy Christians who believe they have to do nothing and can continue to sin, and they will still be resurrected and live

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forever. If that is your belief, I hope you change it because it is not true.

If you currently live in or near a liberal city where they have defunded the police and/or just let crime go unchecked, I think you should be able to see the chaos that exists when there is no law. Law is what keeps things in order and without chaos. If you want peace, then you want law and someone to enforce it. If you want chaos, then you do not want law. Which would you choose?

Christ did not die for us in order to do away with His law, He died in order to take away the death penalty which everyone lives under with their very first sin if they do not repent. In a truly Christian marriage where both people have equal power Gen. 3:16 is not a part of that marriage. Marriages with abuse in them are all about power. Generally traditional marriages are what was taught in the Church of God and they are not what God wanted from the beginning.

**Gen 1:28** And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

They were to be equal partners and to take care of what they had together as one.

## **Holy Days 2023**

**Passover – April 6, 2023 (Observed at Sunset the Evening Before)**

**Passover/Unleavened Bread – April 6-12, 2023**

**Pentecost – May 26, 2023**

**Trumpets - September 16, 2023**

**Atonement – September 25, 2023**

**Tabernacles –September 30, 2023 to October 6, 2023**

**Last Great Day – October 7, 2023**

## **Notes**