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DOES SHE MATTER?
Emotional Intimacy in Marriage in Light of Gender
Distinction

By

Samuel A. Andreades

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO THE
FACULTY OF COVENANT THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

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ABSTRACT

Emotional intimacy is recognized as a crucial, perhaps the most crucial, element in making contemporary marriage work, and evangelical Christians have a higher success rate in intimate marriages than the general population. In examining the distinctives of Christian marriage, gender distinction, increasingly peculiar among the general population, looms large. Studies disagree on whether gender distinction improves marriages or not, but little research has been done focusing on its specific effect on intimacy. Examining emotional intimacy in Christian marriages in light of gender distinction within those marriages, it was therefore hoped, would give insight into any connection between the two. It was expected that Christian husbands currently in an enduring, happy, “intergendered” marriage, and yet with a history of same-sex attraction or “monogendered” relationships, would be among the best spokesmen for the effect of gender on intimacy in marriage. Husbands in such marriages, which are remarkable in overcoming both internal and external struggles, were chosen as the study’s subjects, diverse in geographical location, evangelical Christian tradition, and relationship history.

The import of this research is manifold. Firstly, marriage as an American institution continues its 150 year decline, producing a host of social ills, so insight into what makes some marriages successful in our time is precious. Secondly, in light of surrounding cultural changes in gender views over the last six decades, the persistence of marriage gender roles among Christians becomes increasingly puzzling. This study held out the promise of understanding why some of their deliberate practices endure. Thirdly, many Christians have become uncomfortable with the doctrine of making distinctions in behavior of spouses in marriage, and could be greatly served by understanding reasons

such teaching is given. Fourthly, as the debate about same-sex marriage rages across the land, it would be helpful to know if any distinct benefits accrue in unions involving two genders rather than one. The impact of gender of intimacy intersects with many current cultural quandaries.

A qualitative research design of semi-structured interviews of ten men confirmed the power of emotional intimacy to forge a lasting, happy marriage. No standard measure of emotional intimacy exists in the literature, but the ways various researchers and approaches have conceived of it proffered a multifaceted definition for this study that allowed rich description and comprehensive capture of its experiences. A limited quantitative analysis found a correlation in this sample between gender distinction and marital intimacy, expressed through three venues: decision-making authority, home labor division and a new category of strong helping. These three venues also corresponded to biblical counsel on gender. Many reasons surfaced for the gender-intimacy link, falling in seven different classes of interview answer and providing plausible dynamics for why gender distinction, involving both inherent qualities and deliberate practices, could cultivate intimacy in these couples. Several different research directions were suggested by the results, especially further exploration of the wife's corresponding perspective and the strong helping phenomenon. Good reasons exist for careful generalization of these results.

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CHAPTER ONE

COUNTERING MARRIAGE DECLINE

Marriage at the Bottom

Marriage in America is in trouble. Betsey Stevenson, a professor of public policy at the University of Michigan, and Justin Wolfers, former chief economist at the U.S. Department of Labor, chart marriage rates and divorce rates from 1860 to 2005¹ (Figure 1, page 2). Their data, including recent U.S. Census Bureau findings, show an unmistakable long-term trend of increasing divorce. In 1891, a Cornell professor made the prediction, preposterous at the time, that if trends continued, by 1980 more marriages would end by divorce than by death. As it turned out, from 1960 to 1980, the annual rate of new divorces per thousand people doubled² and he was off by only ten years.³ Marriages have been working less and less well.

¹ Betsey Stevenson and Justin Wolfers, "Marriage and Divorce: Changes and Their Driving Forces," *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 21, no. 2 (Spring, 2007): 27-52.

² Ibid., 29.

³ Cited in Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History: From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Viking, 2005), 181.

Marriages and Divorces per Thousand People, United States 1860–2005

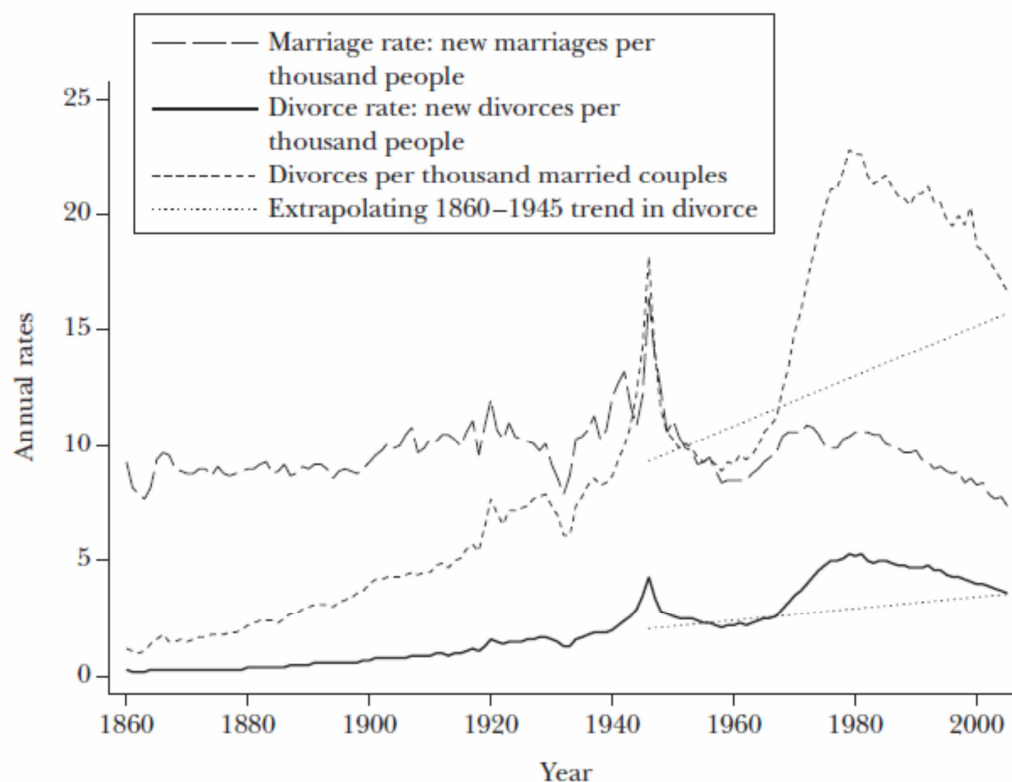


Figure 1: The Long Term Decline of Marriage⁴

Divorce rates in the United States declined from 1980 to the present, and some have highlighted this fact to paint a rosier picture of the state of the institution.

“Americans are...happily married and optimistic about their marriage,” trumpets sociologist and Roman Catholic priest, Andrew M. Greeley, based on his informative 1991 study.⁵ Marriages are “more joyful, more loving, and more satisfying than ever

⁴ Stevenson and Wolfers, 29.

⁵ Andrew M. Greeley, *Faithful Attraction: Discovering Intimacy, Love, and Fidelity in American Marriage*, 1st ed. (New York: Tor: Distributed by St. Martin's Press, 1991), 27. While Greeley does not deny the upward trend in divorces, he prefers to ascribe the cause to women's greater economic freedom and contraception (e.g., p222). But if women are now divorcing more because they can, the question of why they want to remains, along with the fact of marriage decline. Greeley's second answer is that most divorced people remarry, so marriage may be more fluid but not in decline (p237), but this does not answer the lower marriage rate in general.

before in history,” announces marriage historian Stephanie Coontz, in 2005.⁶ “The divorce rate...is now at its lowest level since 1970,” note fellows at the Ethics and Public Policy Center, Peter Wehner & Yuval Levin, cheerily in 2007.⁷ The short-term divorce decline, however, only masks the long term trend. Marriage rates themselves have also declined by almost half since 1970.⁸

W. Bradford Wilcox, Director of the National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia, explains the complexity of the divorce story, noting that college-educated Americans stay married longer, and there are fewer teen marriages and more selective marriages, but among less educated Americans, divorce rates have not fallen at all.⁹ Half of all marriages are now preceded by a period of unmarried cohabitation, which increases the chances of divorce.¹⁰ Even the upper class divorce slowdown merely brings the graph back to the line mapping its upward trend, while the rate of new marriages is lower than ever, measuring back over 150 years (as shown in Figure 1). In short, marriage is still in a state of decline.

Apparently, even marriages that last are suffering. According to Wilcox, “in the early 1970s, seventy percent of married men and sixty-seven percent of married women reported being very happy in their marriages; by the early ’80s, these figures had fallen to

⁶ Coontz, 306.

⁷ Peter Wehner, "Crime, Drugs, Welfare—and Other Good News," *Commentary*, July-December 2007, 20.

⁸ Ibid. This fact is also evident from the graph of Stevenson and Wolfers, 29.

⁹ W. Bradford Wilcox, "The Evolution of Divorce," *National Affairs*, no. 1 (Fall 2009): 88-90.

¹⁰ Everett L. Worthington, *Hope-Focused Marriage Counseling: A Guide to Brief Therapy*, Expanded pbk. ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005), xviii. The “declining significance of marriage” is also documented by L. L. Bumpass and J. A. Sweet, *Cohabitation, Marriage and Union Stability: Preliminary Findings from NSFH2* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin, Center for Demography and Ecology, 1995), 1.

sixty-three percent for men and sixty-two percent for women. Thus marital quality dropped even as divorce rates were reaching record highs.”¹¹ As this fact has become undeniably clear, today “a much larger share of [scholars, therapists, policymakers, and journalists] express concern about the health of marriage in America...than did so in the 1970s.”¹²

The deterioration of marriage can be set within a larger societal picture of choices that limit close relationships. Eric Klinenberg, Director of the Institute for Public Knowledge at New York University, elucidates the historically novel phenomenon of Americans living alone. In 1950, four million Americans lived alone. Today, more than thirty-two million do, accounting for twenty-eight percent of American households, or one out of every seven adults. The rates of people living alone are even higher in urban areas. More than forty percent of all households consist of just one person in Atlanta, Denver, Seattle, San Francisco, and Minneapolis. In Manhattan, the figure is nearly fifty percent.¹³ Klinenberg and American writer Dominique Browning¹⁴ extol the virtues of this new “cult of the individual,”¹⁵ but the trend of aversion to living with others dovetails with the similar marriage movement: people are opting for lives involving less long term commitment.

¹¹ Wilcox, 86.

¹² Ibid., 89. This fact served as one of the pillars in William Bennett’s influential argument for cultural decline in the U.S.: William J. Bennett, *The Index of Leading Cultural Indicators: Facts and Figures on the State of American Society* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994).

¹³ Eric Klinenberg, *Going Solo: The Extraordinary Rise and Surprising Appeal of Living Alone* (New York: Penguin Press, 2012), 1-3.

¹⁴ In addition to Klinenberg’s book, a typical article is Dominique Browning, “Alone Again, Naturally,” *The New York Times*, January 5, 2012. Another is Eric Klinenberg, “One’s a Crowd,” *The New York Times*, February 4, 2012. (All newspaper article sources were used online and so contained no page numbers.)

¹⁵ Klinenberg, *Going Solo: The Extraordinary Rise and Surprising Appeal of Living Alone*, 14.

Getting to the Bottom of Marriage

In seeking to understand what precipitates committed long term relationships, one must consider emotional intimacy. Wilcox accounts for the higher divorce rate by, among other factors, a higher expectation since 1970 for intimacy (“an intense emotional relationship”) that is going unfulfilled.¹⁶ University of Washington psychologist John M. Gottman, known for his rigorous study through close examination of married couples in the Seattle “Love Lab,” came to be able to predict divorce or marital success among couples with ninety-one percent accuracy.¹⁷ After twenty-seven years of research, he concluded that successful marriages “are based on a deep friendship...These couples tend to know each other intimately.”¹⁸ Greeley finds that, even though forty percent of those in marriages that are “bottoming out” think of their spouse as kind and gentle, sixty percent of them do not consider their spouse to be their best friend. Failure to “be best friends” in this majority of floundering marriages is a way of talking about a lack of intimacy. Thirty nine percent consider their spouse “untrustworthy.”¹⁹ In fact, feeling unable to trust one’s spouse and not being made to feel important by one’s spouse are the two highest ranking reasons given by Greeley for marriages ending.²⁰ Again, these are simply different ways of speaking about intimacy. Its absence plays a crucial role in shortening contemporary unions.

¹⁶ Wilcox, 83.

¹⁷ John Mordechai Gottman and Nan Silver, *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*, 1st ed. (New York: Crown Publishers, 1999), 2.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 19-20.

¹⁹ Greeley, 140.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 141.

Others in the field of couples therapy give the same reason for what makes marriages last. Attachment theory, as applied to close relationships, has been heavily researched.²¹ The increasingly prevalent therapy derived from it, focusing on emotion,²² hence the name “Emotionally Focused Therapy,” has now been used for twenty eight years²³ and boasts the best results of any other measured form of couple intervention.²⁴ What accounts for this success? Its “ultimate goal...is to help couples create...secure emotional bonds.”²⁵

It is accurate to say, then, that “the emotional functions and character of marriage have become particularly crucial for contemporary marital happiness and marital stability.”²⁶ Emotional intimacy is the prime determiner of healthy, lasting marriages today.

Helping Marriage Look Up From the Bottom

“Most studies indicate that religious practice is associated with higher levels of marital quality.”²⁷ Greeley states it as “...indisputable: the family [meaning couple] that

²¹ Susan M. Johnson, "The Contribution of Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy," *Journal of Contemporary Psychotherapy* 37, no. 1 (2007): 47.

²² *Ibid.*, 48-49.

²³ Susan M. Johnson and Andrea K. Wittenborn, "New Research Findings on Emotionally Focused Therapy: Introduction to Special Section," *Journal of Marital & Family Therapy* 38, no. Supp S1 (2012): 18.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 19.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ W. Bradford Wilcox and Steven L. Nock, "What's Love Got to Do with It? Equality, Equity, Commitment and Women's Marital Quality," *Social Forces* 84, no. 3 (2006): 1322. A similar assessment is found in Mark T. Schaefer and David H. Olson, "Assessing Intimacy: The Pair Inventory*," *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 7, no. 1 (1981): 47. It makes sense if “emotions are the principal organizers of behavior,” as stated by Susan M. Johnson and Paul S. Greenman, "The Path to a Secure Bond: Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy," *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 62, no. 5 (2006): 599.

²⁷ Nicholas H. Wolfinger and W. Bradford Wilcox, "Happily Ever After? Religion, Marital Status, Gender and Relationship Quality in Urban Families," *Social Forces* 86, no. 3 (2008): 1312, cite relevant studies.

tends to pray together...tends to stay together.”²⁸ Vaughn R. A. Call and Tim B. Heaton, Brigham Young University sociologists, find, for example, that when both spouses attend church regularly, the couple has the lowest risk of divorce.²⁹ Even Pennsylvania State University sociology researchers Alan Booth et. al., whose particular marriage study produced the unusual result of no impact from religion, acknowledge that a perceived achievement in “covenant connection with the Divine,” in what they called “fundamentalist religion,” might indeed bring about higher marriage quality and account for the large number of studies that do find an impact.³⁰

Researchers looking more closely at the connection between religious faith and flourishing marriages find that faith has a positive impact on romance,³¹ sexual satisfaction,³² and other marriage matters. Margaret R. Wilson, an Arizona State University Researcher, and Erik E. Filsinger, a University of Alabama sociologist, attempt to clarify the connection by examining four measures in 190 couples: degree of couple agreement about important issues and tasks, frequency of quarreling, kissing and confiding, frequency of sharing ideas and working together, and expression of affection

An additional list is found in Margaret R. Wilson and Erik E. Filsinger, "Religiosity and Marital Adjustment: Multidimensional Interrelationships," *Journal of Marriage & Family* 48, no. 1 (1986): 147. Increase in marital quality from religious faith was also in the findings of Wilcox and Nock, "What's Love Got to Do with It? Equality, Equity, Commitment and Women's Marital Quality," 1325, 1339, 1342.

²⁸ Greeley, 67. The powerful role of prayer, specifically, is detailed on 118-119, 189-190. Prayer, he notes, is a much more powerful predictor of marital satisfaction than even frequency of sexual intercourse.

²⁹ Vaughn R. A. Call and Tim B. Heaton, "Religious Influence on Marital Stability," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36, no. 3 (1997): 382. Church attendance is also found to positively relate to marriage satisfaction by Greeley, 190.

³⁰ Alan Booth and others, "Belief and Behavior: Does Religion Matter in Today's Marriage?" *Journal of Marriage and Family* 57, no. 3 (1995): 661-671.

³¹ Greeley, 126.

³² *Ibid.*, 85.

and sex.³³ The first three of these measures are, again, articulations of emotional intimacy. The researchers find that things like attending and supporting a Christian church, experiencing repentance and forgiveness, and believing strongly in God associate strongly with these first three dimensions in the husbands.³⁴

Discussing the stringent design of their study, Wilson and Filsinger note that this connection between evangelical Christian faith and good marriages does “not lend itself to an easy nonreligious explanation.”³⁵ Therefore, it behooves those who wish to better understand successful marriage to inspect what is distinctive in the specific practices of strongly identifying Christians that may increase emotional intimacy, that key to marriage longevity. What gives Christian marriages their edge?

Different Bottoms in Marriage

Conservative Christians view gender distinction as a vital component of marriage,³⁶ based on the Bible’s teaching.³⁷ Currently, local evangelical churches, organizations, and whole denominations, in response to the culture’s move toward non-distinction of gender in marriage, or “egalitarianism,” adopt “complementarian” edicts such as the Danvers Statement, which affirm the importance of gender distinction in the marriage relationship. In 1998, the Southern Baptist Convention, representing the largest American Protestant denomination at sixteen million members, took the unusual step of

³³ Wilson and Filsinger, 147-148.

³⁴ Ibid., 149-150.

³⁵ Ibid., 150.

³⁶ William Bradford Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), 10.

³⁷ Daniel Doriani surveys the interpretation on a Bible passage such as Ephesians 5:21-22 and finds a two thousand year history of making gender distinction key to marriage in Wayne A. Grudem, *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2002), 203-219.

amending its confessional document to add such a statement on gender distinction in marriage.³⁸ Disavowing egalitarianism was obviously important to the denomination, as this was only the second amendment to Southern Baptists' *Statement* made in its entire history.³⁹ Promise Keepers, another very visible expression of evangelicalism, makes gender distinction a keystone of its mission to improve Christian marriages. From 1994 to 1997, more than a million American men attended Promise Keepers events.⁴⁰

As to what gender is, however, a good deal of haze pervades academy,⁴¹ church,⁴² and culture,⁴³ and these clouds seep into marriage relationships and practices. The

³⁸ Anthony L. Jordan, et al., "Report of the Baptist Faith and Message Study Committee to the Southern Baptist Convention" (Salt Lake City, UT: Southern Baptist Convention, 1998). The relevant paragraph added reads, "The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation." Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, *The Baptist Faith and Message* (Nashville: Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1999-2001).

³⁹ Christian Smith, *Christian America?: What Evangelicals Really Want* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 160.

⁴⁰ Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands*, 1.

⁴¹ So confess University of California professors of Sociology, Candace West and Don H. Zimmerman, in their seminal work on gender as a social construct, Judith Lorber and Susan A. Farrell, editors, "The Social Construction of Gender" (Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications, in cooperation with Sociologists for Women in Society, 1991), 13-15. According to University of Virginia professor of Politics, Steven Rhoads, although feminism has many hues, eight out of nine types of feminism include the tenet that gender is socially constructed, Steven E. Rhoads, *Taking Sex Differences Seriously*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Encounter Books, 2004), 14. As one can imagine, this view leads to little agreement as to what makes a woman or a man. Amy Allen astutely summarizes the conflict within American feminism from the 1970s forward in Amy Allen, "'Mommy Wars' Redux: A False Conflict," *The New York Times*, May 27 2012.

⁴² An example of this confusion is seen in Paul Jewett's insightful book, Paul King Jewett, *Man as Male and Female: A Study in Sexual Relationships from a Theological Point of View* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975). After pages and pages extolling the importance of gender for understanding ourselves, Jewett confesses, "Some...contemporary theologians are not so sure that they know what it means to be a man in distinction to a woman [or vice-versa]...the writer shares this uncertainty..." (p178). Wayne Grudem points out this example in Grudem, 33-34.

⁴³ Consider the dance around what masculinity is, and an inability to reach a definition, in a recent column of the newspaper of record: Charles M. Blow, "Real Men and Pink Suits," *The New York Times*, February

significance of the mystery goes beyond an argument about whether gender is inherent or socially constructed. It presses upon how husbands and wives behave toward each other. The association of strong Christian faith with good marriages, along with the emphasis among evangelicals on gender distinction in those marriages, raises the question of whether making a difference about gender makes a difference in marital quality. Does a woman being a woman or a man being a man play any role in marriages that deepen in intimacy over time? The impact of gender distinction on emotional intimacy has not been researched, so the answer to this question is not known.

Gendered Marriage from Top to Bottom

If one is to focus on gender distinction in marriage, then the question of differences between heterosexual and homosexual relationships becomes quite relevant. Canadian psychologists at the University of New Brunswick, in their study of emotional intimacy in homosexual relationships, indicate some potentially large differences in experiences of intimacy between hetero- and homosexual couples.⁴⁴ They attribute these differences, in large part, to attitudes present in the culture in which sexual minority relationships occur, but the discussion suggests that there may be other causes. Unfortunately, homosexuality researcher Tyrel J. Starks concedes that, “currently, the

10, 2012. Consider the same dance around femininity in Frank Bruni, "The Bleaker Sex," *The New York Times*, March 31, 2012; and Maureen Dowd, "We Offer More Than Ankles, Gentleman," *The New York Times*, January 12, 2013. John P. Bartkowski finds the debate about gender in churches “remarkably similar to academic and popular disputes on the subject,” in John P. Bartkowski, *Remaking the Godly Marriage: Gender Negotiation in Evangelical Families* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 44.

⁴⁴ Jacqueline N. Cohen, E. Sandra Byers, and Lindsay P. Walsh, "Factors Influencing the Sexual Relationships of Lesbians and Gay Men," *International Journal of Sexual Health* 20, no. 3 (2008): 163-164, 172.

literature related to sexual orientation is ambiguous with regard to the relationship of sexual orientation...and intimacy.”⁴⁵

People who self-consciously go for an “intergendered,” that is, across-the-genders experience in marriage are an important source for understanding this phenomenon. Specifically, a helpful place to descry intimacy impacts of gender is in the experiences of those who know same-sex attraction (SSA) and yet have chosen to enter or remain in an intergendered marriage. While there could be many reasons for this arrangement, it is useful to ask if they perceive some benefit to gender difference in marriage. How many such “mixed orientation couples”⁴⁶ reside in America is unknown,⁴⁷ but author and ex-wife of a gay man, Amity Pierce Buxton, who founded the Straight Spouse Network servicing thousands of spouses in similar situations, estimates the number to be two million.⁴⁸

Little research has been done on intact, happily married, mixed-orientation couples but there are indications of an unexplored dynamic that causes some of these couples to meet the extra challenge of same sex attraction in one of the partners and still achieve contentment. Mark A. Yarhouse, the clinical psychologist who formed the Institute for the Study of Sexual Identity at Regent University, has done extensive work with the mixed orientation couple population and has published four studies on them. In

⁴⁵ Tyrel J. Starks and others, "Gendered Sexuality: A New Model and Measure of Attraction and Intimacy," *Journal of Homosexuality* 56, no. 1 (2009): 14.

⁴⁶ The term is coined in Mark A. Yarhouse and others, "Characteristics of Mixed Orientation Couples: An Empirical Study," *Edification: The Transdisciplinary Journal of Christian Psychology* 4, no. 2 (2011): 41, 42.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁴⁸ Amity Pierce Buxton, "Writing Our Own Script: How Bisexual Men and Their Heterosexual Wives Maintain Their Marriages after Disclosure," *Journal of Bisexuality* 1, no. 2-3 (2001): 155.

three studies performed over five years on sixteen stable couples, the love between the husband and wife is the most frequently cited reason for satisfaction in their marriage and for staying together.⁴⁹ Another study of 267 people involved in mixed orientation relationships reveals several themes, including trust and love, to be a feature of the couples' longevity.⁵⁰ When participants with good marriages were asked about features of their relationship, they most often cited friendship and companionship as the best aspects of their marriage,⁵¹ even though physical aspects presented a great challenge.⁵² "Friendship and companionship" approximate, once again, ways of talking about emotional intimacy. These reported experiences suggest that spouses who have experienced SSA, and especially those who have had previous relationships based on those desires, may be particularly sensitive to the impacts of then having an opposite gendered marriage partner. They may uniquely understand if that opposite-gendered spouse brings something different to a marriage relationship.

According to Greeley, men and women tend to agree that, as a group, women work harder on their marriages than men.⁵³ So the effect of women acting in a marriage may be the place to start an examination of gender and intimacy. Do the Christian

⁴⁹ Mark A. Yarhouse, Lisa M. Pawlowski, and Erica S. N. Tan, "Intact Marriages in Which One Partner Dis-Identifies with Experiences of Same-Sex Attraction," *American Journal of Family Therapy* 31, no. 5 (2003): 382-383. A follow up study was done a year later: Mark A. Yarhouse and Robin L. Seymore, "Intact Marriages in Which One Partner Dis-Identifies with Experiences of Same-Sex Attraction: A Follow-up Study," *American Journal of Family Therapy* 34, no. 2 (2006). A second follow up study was done five years later: Mark A. Yarhouse, Christine H. Gow, and Edward B. Davis, "Intact Marriages in Which One Partner Experiences Same-Sex Attraction: A 5-Year Follow-up Study," *Family Journal* 17, no. 4 (2009).

⁵⁰ Yarhouse and others, "Characteristics of Mixed Orientation Couples: An Empirical Study," 41.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 48-49.

⁵² Yarhouse's study lists "intimacy," along with sex, as the most frequent difficult aspect of the marriage, but it appears that Yarhouse is using the word to mean sexual intimacy rather than emotional intimacy.

⁵³ Greeley, 170.

practices of a wife who strongly believes that she makes a unique contribution to her husband by being a woman foster the experience of emotional intimacy in the husband? Does such a husband, with a wife who purposely practices gender distinction of some kind, perceive a deeper level of unity, sharing, trust, support, dependence, companionship or identity definition? SSA obviously poses an additional obstacle to marriage between a man and woman who choose to nonetheless stay together. So an examination of how couples in which the husband experiences SSA understand and practice gender distinction, and how they achieve deep levels of intimacy in their marriages, would be clarifying.

Problem Summary

With marriage in a long-attested state of decline in the United States, and a failure to achieve emotional intimacy as a significant identifiable cause of low marriage rates and high divorce rates, conservative Christian matrimony presents a counter-cultural phenomenon. Among the distinctive practices of Christians in these more successful marriages, gender distinction is prominent, yet there has been little study of its role in cultivating intimacy. This study explored that role.

Fruitful examination of a gender-intimacy dynamic involves seeking out cases of marriage which have overcome obstacles to quality and longevity and in which the partners are particularly sensitive to the impact of gender on their intergendered relationship. In this study, such cases were sought in mixed orientation marriages of Christians that are thriving. It was hypothesized that if there is gender-induced intimacy that brings value to marriages, a rich vein may be mined in Christian marriages with wives who embrace gender distinction and husbands with a history of SSA.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to discover how evangelical Christian husbands with a history of SSA experience emotional intimacy with their Christian wives in light of their gender distinction.

Primary Research Questions

- 1) In what ways and to what extent does the Christian husband with a history of same sex attraction experience emotional intimacy with his Christian wife?
- 2) What gender distinction do these husbands perceive in their wives in marriage?
- 3) How is her gender distinction related to his experience of emotional intimacy with her?

Significance of the Study

This study contributes a greater understanding of four matters of import.

First, polls show that almost all people hold marriage as a personal goal for themselves.⁵⁴ In the face of marriage decline, then, the results lend sorely needed insight into what fosters marriage-sustaining intimacy among some couples. They uncover factors that help some marital relationships deepen over time instead of floundering in the shallows of weakening commitments.

Second, an in-depth exploration of husbands who are sensitive to gender distinction married to wives who deliberately practice gender distinction illuminates some of the reasons for the persistent belief in, and practice of, gender roles in marriage. Recent studies find that gender stereotypes “are not decreasing, if anything they are intensifying.”⁵⁵ Although the country went through an enormous shift toward an

⁵⁴ Worthington, xvii.

⁵⁵ Lloyd B. Lueptow, Lori Garovich-Szabo, and Margaret B. Lueptow, "Social Change and the Persistence of Sex Typing: 1974–1997," *Social Forces* 80, no. 1 (2001): 7, 10. A similar assessment is made in Wilcox

egalitarian view of marriage over the latter half of the twentieth century,⁵⁶ between 1994 and 2004 the percentage of Americans preferring the male breadwinner/female homemaker family model rose, not declined, from thirty four percent to forty percent. In 1997, a quarter of stay-at-home mothers said full-time work would be ideal. By 2007, only sixteen percent wanted such. And there was a significant jump in the percentage of married women who left the labor force.⁵⁷ According to Coontz, feminists worry that the country is witnessing a resurgence of traditional gender roles and beliefs.⁵⁸ Whether or not this is due to an actual reverse in the broader culture, gender distinction in marriage persists among evangelical Christians.

Third, even though there is widespread practice of different functions in marriage in conservative or evangelical churches, any congregation that makes gender distinction a topic of discussion uncovers intense feelings and discord. Jerram Barrs, professor of Christian studies and contemporary culture at Covenant Theological Seminary, to publicize a book on women in the Bible, gave talks in recent years on the Bible's high view of women. He confessed being overwhelmed on every speaking occasion at the emotional response that that message evokes.⁵⁹ The Bible's message that women are

and Nock, "What's Love Got to Do with It? Equality, Equity, Commitment and Women's Marital Quality," 1339-1340. West and Zimmerman, as well, puzzle over how the persistent inequity in the division of home labor has roots deep within gender in Lorber and Farrell, 29-31.

⁵⁶ Sabino Kornrich, Julie Brines, and Katrina Leupp, "Egalitarianism, Housework, and Sexual Frequency in Marriage," *American Sociological Review* 78, no. 1 (2013): 27.

⁵⁷ Stephanie Coontz, "Why Gender Equality Stalled," *The New York Times*, February 16, 2013.

⁵⁸ Ibid. Coontz attributes these statistics to a failure in corporations' work policy to be family-friendly, but this explanation is unconvincing. Harder work for everyone still does not explain why the woman returns home rather than the man, or why anyone returns home, for that matter.

⁵⁹ This included, on one occasion, a several-minute cheering ovation from women, to the astonishment of the men present. Jerram Barrs, *Through His Eyes: God's Perspective on Women in the Bible* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2009), 10.

equally created in God's image, by definition, has been available and without innovation for the last two thousand years. Yet it provokes an immediate and intense response when the topic is broached. It is as if the marriage gender distinction teaching, also in the Bible,⁶⁰ is somehow felt to obscure the message of equality. It is similarly telling that prominent pastor and author John Piper indicates disagreement in this area even in his Minneapolis church, Bethlehem Baptist, which is an enclave of conservative thought and practice. He divulges, "Not all the women of our church see things exactly the same way."⁶¹ These simmering feelings show a need for women in churches who feel increasingly conflicted about evangelical teaching in the current cultural context to perceive a logic behind what their Bible seems to be saying about gender. Exploring benefits accrued by gender distinction, as this study has, may help alleviate the smoldering discomfort with this topic that is present in women in churches. And that is no small group. According to the General Social Survey, thirty-four percent of all adults in the United States are conservative Protestant Christians.⁶²

Fourth, as the debate about gay marriage rages across the United States,⁶³ it was worth comparing intergendered with "monogendered" relationships and asking what advantages one or the other offers.

⁶⁰ APPENDIX IV takes up the Bible's teaching directly as background to evangelical Christian's practices.

⁶¹ John Piper and Wayne A. Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 54.

⁶² Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands*, 2. Sally K. Gallagher counts 20 million Americans who identify as evangelicals, Sally K. Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity and Gendered Family Life* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 16.

⁶³ Jeff Chu does a good job of conveying the current diversity of opinion and stances on the issue, even within the American Christian church, in his memoir: Jeff Chu, *Does Jesus Really Love Me?: A Gay Christian's Pilgrimage in Search of God in America* (New York: HarperCollins, 2013).

So the impact of gender on relationship intimacy intersects with many current cultural quandaries.

Definition of Terms

Intimacy (as in the psychology literature, used interchangeably with emotional intimacy) – a bond of emotional closeness, constituted by unity, sharing, trust, dependence, feeling supported, companionship and identity formation.

Gender Distinction Practices – customs like those among conservative Christian couples, either home labor-oriented (husband bread-winning, wife caring for home and children) or broadly relationship-oriented (husband leading, wife deferring, granting husband prerogative in decision-making).

Intergendered Relationship/Marriage – a couple composed of a man and a woman, or a marriage with a male husband and female wife. As applied to a relationship, it means a committed romantic union conducted across gender lines.

Monogendered Relationship/Marriage – a couple or marriage composed of two men or of two women. A committed romantic union conducted among those of the same gender.

Mixed Orientation Marriage – intergendered unions in which one partner experiences SSA.

Also note that evangelicals, fundamentalists and conservative Christians may be distinguished as overlapping groups.⁶⁴ However, the terms, “conservative Christian,” “evangelical Christian,” and “Christian” may be considered synonymous for our purposes and are used interchangeably in this paper. The terms are also meant to include

⁶⁴ Smith, 17; Gallagher, 4, 9.

Pentecostal and charismatic Christians, which make up a quarter of evangelicals in the United States.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Gallagher, 13.

CHAPTER TWO

A LITERATURE REVIEW OF INTIMACY, CHRISTIAN GENDER UNDERSTANDING AND MIXED ORIENTATION MARRIAGES

This study touched on a variety of contemporary human experiences and inquiries, but the central point of research, the play of gender distinction on emotional intimacy in marriage, focused the review with four questions:

1. How does one speak of intimacy and measure it?
2. How do conservative Christians understand and practice gender distinction in their marriages? How are these wives being women to their husbands?
3. What does gender distinction do to intimacy in marriage?
4. What is the experience of a husband with same sex attraction in an intergendered marriage?

How Does One Speak of Intimacy and Measure It?

According to marriage counseling researcher, Everett L. Worthington, marital success is not as much about how partners behave toward each other, whether they communicate effectively or manage conflict, or even about how they confess transgressions and forgive, as much as it is about development of the emotional bond that underlies these acts. After writing a widely used marriage counseling manual based on years of experience and research, and reviewing the text after seven years of further research and feedback from numerous counselors, he noted that his main self-correction would be to “write more about emotion and emotional bonds.”⁶⁶ According to W. Bradford Wilcox, a man’s emotional involvement in a marriage matters far more to a

⁶⁶ Worthington, xxv-xxvi, xxviii.

wife's happiness than his level of commitment, his participation in household labor, the presence of children, or even perceptions of equality.⁶⁷ It has become increasingly clear that emotional intimacy is one of the best barometers of marital happiness.⁶⁸

Yet a review of sociology, psychology, and marriage literature reveals no universal standard definition of intimacy. Some too narrowly equate it with, for example, self-disclosure.⁶⁹ Other definitions are too broad, such as "a mutual need satisfaction."⁷⁰ Cornell psychologist Cindy Hazan is an expert on human mating and pair-bonding, and her research has been featured in documentary films and news articles around the world. Phillip Shaver, former executive officer of the Society of Experimental Social Psychology and former president of the International Association for Relationship Research, also studies social relationships and emotions at the University of California, Davis. Almost twenty years ago, Hazan and Shaver openly complained of the lack of a comprehensive theory of close relationships in their field,⁷¹ which led to their efforts to find such a unifier in attachment theory.

Proponents of attachment theory⁷² hold that styles of adult romantic love translate from affectional bonds in infancy and childhood⁷³ because bonding patterns remain

⁶⁷ Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands*, 6.

⁶⁸ Worthington, 69.

⁶⁹ Valerian J. Derlega and Alan L. Chaikin, *Sharing Intimacy: What We Reveal to Others and Why* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1975).

⁷⁰ Howard John Clinebell and Charlotte H. Clinebell, *The Intimate Marriage*, 1st ed. (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), 66, 68, 83.

⁷¹ Cindy Hazan and Phillip R. Shaver, "Deeper into Attachment Theory," *Psychological Inquiry* 5, no. 1 (1994): 76-77.

⁷² First explored in John Bowlby and Institute of Psycho-analysis (Great Britain), *Attachment and Loss*, 3 vols., The International Psycho-Analytical Library (London: Hogarth P.; Institute of Psycho-Analysis, 1969), after Bowlby's dissatisfaction with psychoanalysis in explaining the behavior of institutionalized children.

largely stable into adulthood.⁷⁴ Consequently, the theory focuses on the feeling of security as fundamental.⁷⁵ Marriage therapies derived from this theory speak of “the safety of intimacy” and define emotional connection as the presence of a “safe haven,” a place of trust and security.⁷⁶ A popular book on such Emotionally Focused Therapy was written by Archibald D. Hart and Sharon Morris May. As the former dean of the School of Psychology at Fuller Theological Seminary and the director of the Haven of Safety Relationships in Pasadena, California, respectively, Hart and May write, “the greatest predictor of marital... longevity is the presence of trust...”⁷⁷ Trust is undoubtedly a crucial element of intimacy.

But are there others? Of the variety of ways other researchers categorize what makes a good marriage, some are more useful than others in isolating and measuring the emotional bond, but all of them contribute to its definition. For example, Margaret R. Wilson and Erik E. Filsinger follow the jargon-heavy but frequently used marriage quality scale of Graham Spanier called “dyadic⁷⁸ marital adjustment.”⁷⁹ Long before his

⁷³ Cindy Hazan and Phillip R. Shaver, "Romantic Love Conceptualized as an Attachment Process," *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology* 52, no. 3 (1987): 511.

⁷⁴ Hazan and Shaver, "Deeper into Attachment Theory," 70-71; Cindy Hazan and Phillip R. Shaver, "Attachment as an Organizational Framework for Research on Close Relationships," *Psychological Inquiry* 5, no. 1 (1994): 7.

⁷⁵ Hazan and Shaver, "Attachment as an Organizational Framework for Research on Close Relationships," 9, 17. "Secure lovers described their most important love experience as...trusting..." Hazan and Shaver, "Romantic Love Conceptualized as an Attachment Process," 515.

⁷⁶ For example, Archibald D. Hart and Sharon Morris May, *Safe Haven Marriage: A Marriage You Can Come Home To* (Nashville: W Pub. Group, 2003), xi, 87. The goal of the couples' therapy itself is to create safety, says Susan M. Johnson in Johnson, "The Contribution of Emotionally Focused Couples Therapy," 48, 49. Johnson also uses the term, "safe haven" on page 51.

⁷⁷ Hart and Morris May, 61. They also include emotional availability and sensitive responsiveness as predictors, but trust remains supreme.

⁷⁸ "Dyadic" means involving two people.

⁷⁹ Graham Spanier, "Measuring Dyadic Adjustment: New Scales for Assessing the Quality of Marriage and

recent indictment for conspiracy and resignation as president of Pennsylvania State University, Spanier worked as a family sociologist, founded the *Journal of Family Issues*, and published widely. Spanier's scale uses thirty-two variables categorized in four dimensions. The first of these is "consensus," or degree of couple agreement about important issues and tasks. The second is "satisfaction," involving frequency of quarreling, kissing and confiding, as well as commitment to the continuance of the relationship. The third is "cohesion," which is a measure of solidarity as determined by reports of frequency of sharing ideas, common interests, and working together. The final dimension is "affectional expression," which looks at the couple's agreement about affection and sex.⁸⁰ While this dyadic adjustment scale has proven to be a resilient way of speaking of a quality of marriage,⁸¹ the framework does not isolate intimacy. Emotional closeness is instead spread across the dyadic adjustment variables.

Alternatively, many marriage therapists, purporting that people value different types of intimacy differently, use the Personal Assessment of Intimacy in Relationships (PAIR), which conceives of five types of intimacy, including emotional intimacy.⁸² The measure, developed through contributions from family professionals, marriage enrichment group participants, graduate students and therapists, asks subjects questions such as,

Similar Dyads," *Journal of Marriage & Family* 38, no. 1 (1976): 15.

⁸⁰ Wilson and Filsinger, 147-148.

⁸¹ Spanier speaks of hundreds of studies using the scale in Graham B. Spanier and Linda Thompson, "A Confirmatory Analysis of the Dyadic Adjustment Scale," *Journal of Marriage & Family* 44, no. 3 (1982): 731. He also gives a helpful overview of the scale there.

⁸² Schaefer and Olson, 50-51.

“Does your partner listen to you?”

“Can you state your feelings and have your partner understand them?”

“Do you sometimes feel neglected or sometimes lonely when together with your partner?”

Worthington, following the PAIR assessment, defines intimacy as “a sense of unity or bonding.”⁸³

Identity definition should also be considered in measuring intimacy. As University of Ottawa professor of psychology, and founder of the International Centre for Excellence in Emotionally Focused Therapy, Susan M. Johnson and University of Quebec psychologist Paul S. Greenman explain, “Patterns of interaction with loved ones are the arenas in which individuals experience and define themselves.”⁸⁴ Andrew M. Greeley finds that the most important direct influence on the happiness of a marriage is making the spouse feel important,⁸⁵ which feeling could also be a way of speaking of this identity-forming constituent of intimacy. Some researchers go farther than others in seeing emotional bonding as helping to build and define a person’s identity, but it is also obviously germane.

Sex therapist Philip Colgan, attempting a broader definition in his study of same-sex relationships, defines “intimacy functioning” as having affective components of trusting in and caring for, behavioral components of listening to and responding to, and cognitive components of affirming the relationship’s value and faith in its

⁸³ Worthington, 68.

⁸⁴ Johnson and Greenman, "The Path to a Secure Bond: Emotionally Focused Couple Therapy," 599.

⁸⁵ Greeley, 119.

dependability.⁸⁶ Other researchers speak of experiences of “emotional intimacy and companionship,” as “feeling accepted, understood, safe and supported,” “sharing,” and “complementariness.”⁸⁷

The plethora of intimacy measures and definitions tends to confuse rather than aid attempts at standardization. That it is also difficult to distinguish between an impact of intimacy and an activity of intimacy, or even a prerequisite to intimacy, compounds the challenge of arriving at the wording that best captures the experience. This study took a collective approach, regarding the different ways these researchers and therapists talk about intimacy as probably capturing a part of the experience. It was thought that the surfeit of definitions uncovers intimacy as a jewel of many facets, reflecting the wealth of human experience and identity. Table 1 arranges the various descriptions encountered in the literatures under headings that help demarcate the different facets.

⁸⁶ Philip Colgan, "Treatment of Identity and Intimacy Issues in Gay Males," *Journal of Homosexuality* 14, no. 3/4 (1987): 101.

⁸⁷ Cohen et. al., 2008, 163.

Table 1 —Ways of Speaking about Intimacy

- I. Overall Definition of Intimacy:
 - A sense of bonding
 - Intense emotional relationship
 - Love

- II. Constituents of Intimacy:
 - 1. Unity
 - Ability to resolve conflict
 - Forgiveness
 - Lack of quarreling
 - Agreement or solidarity regarding issues and tasks

 - 2. Sharing
 - Ability to share feelings and express one's self
 - Confiding
 - Self-disclosure
 - Sharing ideas
 - Responding to one another
 - Listening to one another
 - Working together

 - 3. Trust
 - Belief in the relationship's dependability
 - Feeling safe

 - 4. Dependence

 - 5. Feeling Supported
 - Not feeling neglected

 - 6. Companionship
 - Best friend, friendship
 - Expressions of affection
 - Don't feel lonely when together

 - 7. Identity formation
 - Understand who I am
 - Made to feel important
 - Made to feel accepted
 - Complementariness
 - Hurts and joys are felt to be understood

Table 1 recommended decomposition of the first primary research question: “In what ways and to what extent does the husband experience emotional intimacy with his wife?” into the following seven sub-questions:

To what degree is he in unity with his wife?

How deeply does he share with his wife?

To what degree does he trust his wife?

In what ways does he depend upon his wife?

In what ways does he feel supported by his wife?

What degree of companionship does he experience with his wife?

To what extent does he feel his identity built by his wife?

The interviews, based on these sub-questions, explored intimacy in its plurality.

How do Conservative Christians Understand and Practice Gender Distinction?

A longstanding body of survey research establishes that “traditionalist gender ideologies are alive and well among...evangelicals.”⁸⁸ An attempt to review sex differences studies,⁸⁹ or to explore how they relate to the topic of gender, was beyond the scope of this study. But it can be said that evangelical Christians tend to view gender as real, indeed, as a gift from God rather than as a social construction or a malleable

⁸⁸ Bartkowski, 5; Gallagher, 46. While John P. Bartkowski (e.g., p43, 57) and Sally K. Gallagher (e.g., pp40-46) attempt to be sensitive to egalitarian evangelicals as a “burgeoning” competing force, the force remains, as Christian Smith says, a “fairly small minority,” Smith, 171. In Gallagher and Smith’s joint study, only five percent of evangelical respondents espoused an ideal of solely mutual submission: Sally K. Gallagher and Christian Smith, “Symbolic Traditionalism and Pragmatic Egalitarianism: Contemporary Evangelicals, Families, and Gender,” *Gender & Society* 13, no. 2 (1999): 227.

⁸⁹ A thorough treatment of these differences can be found in Carol Ann Rinzler’s dictionary of differences: Carol Ann Rinzler, *Why Eve Doesn't Have an Adam's Apple: A Dictionary of Sex Differences* (New York: Facts on File, 1996). A more succinct and recent picture of the state of sex differences research is given in the two articles by David Brooks: David Brooks, “Mind over Muscle,” *The New York Times*, October 16, 2005; David Brooks, “Is Chemistry Destiny?” *The New York Times*, September 17, 2006. Another illuminating treatment appears in Rhoads, 14-44.

convention that could be liberated from biology.⁹⁰ Their essentialist view is important to consider because what they believe about inherent differences between men and women informs the way they live. But gender also pertains to what women and men practice in marriage.

A review of evangelical⁹¹ literature and popular conservative Christian books on gender roles in marriage shaped discussion with the husbands in this study. Larry Christenson's 1970 book, *The Christian Family*, represented the leading edge of a wave of family advice books that broke over the ensuing decades. The book won the Gold Book Award and Gold Medallion Award, selling over 1.2 million copies in subsequent editions. Christenson taught in a heavily essentialist tone that husbands' and wives' responsibilities toward one another were burdens to help drive them to God. The husband is responsible to rule, the wife to submit.⁹² Elisabeth Elliot, missionary, popular author and speaker, writing later in that decade, likewise declared that a man is created to lead, initiate, and rule while woman, created for man, is meant to respond, follow, adjust, adapt, submit to, and respect her husband.⁹³

In addition, division of labor is included in the distinctions enumerated by both Christenson and Elliot. According to the former, the wife is responsible for the home and the husband for bread-winning. Elliot concurs, noting that part of a woman's job as wife

⁹⁰ "Essentialism remains the dominant discourse within evangelicalism." Bartkowski, 162.

⁹¹ Non-evangelical Christian writing, similar to secular writing, expresses agnosticism on the meaning of masculine and feminine.

⁹² Larry Christenson, *The Christian Family* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1974), 41-42.

⁹³ Elisabeth Elliot, *Let Me Be a Woman: Notes on Womanhood for Valerie* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1976), 13, 50-51; Elisabeth Elliot, *The Mark of a Man: Following Christ's Example of Masculinity*, New pbk. ed. (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 2006), 171-172. This book was first published in 1981.

is to make the home and, in doing that, to create a place of peace and beauty, while the man's sphere is the world of work.⁹⁴

More recent conservative Christian authors offer a variety of answers to the question of what constitutes gender distinction in practice, but these two features continue to appear. John Piper, in the book that won *Christianity Today's* 1993 Book of the Year Award, lists three responsibilities for each member of the marriage. He says that the husband is to lead, provide for, and protect the wife. The wife is to affirm, receive and nurture strength and leadership from (and in) the husband.⁹⁵ Long-time advocate for gender distinction, professor of theology and biblical studies at Phoenix Seminary Wayne Grudem founded the Council of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood in 1987. He also lists three responsibilities for each partner. Though his husband responsibilities are the same as Piper's, two of the wife's are different. The wife is to submit, but Grudem instead identifies other feminine practices as caring for the home and caring for the children.⁹⁶ Richard D. Phillips, pastor of Second Presbyterian Church in Greenville, South Carolina, working from God's commissioning of Adam in Genesis 2:15, says that the husband's task is to work (cultivate and provide) and to keep (protect).⁹⁷ Phillips does not address the corresponding feminine side, but one could surmise from his exegesis that it would be to assist and beautify.

⁹⁴ Elliot, *Let Me Be a Woman: Notes on Womanhood for Valerie*, 43, 44, 79, 101, 104, 132.

⁹⁵ Piper and Grudem, 35-36.

⁹⁶ Grudem, 37-40.

⁹⁷ Richard D. Phillips, *The Masculine Mandate: God's Calling to Men* (Lake Mary, FL: Reformation Trust Pub., 2009), 8.

Some writers stick to a more abstract and relationship-focused characterization. Alan Medinger, founding president of Exodus International Ministries and founder of Regeneration Ministry to assist people in living lives of sexual integrity, affirms four essences for each gender, developed from his conception of masculinity and femininity. Sensitive to the overlapping trait distributions of sex differences, these essences correspond to specialties. Husbands are to operate in outer directedness, initiation, authority, and truth. Wives are to operate in inner directedness, response, power, and mercy.⁹⁸ Likewise Leanne Payne, founder of Pastoral Care Ministries and research fellow at Yale Divinity School, who has addressed hundreds of thousands through her books and seminars, conceives of the masculine and feminine, properly shared by both men and women, as capacities that need to be cultivated in proper balance. The masculine is initiation, leading, will, drive to power, the power to honor the truth and do good, discursive reason, and matter. The feminine is response, yielding, goodness, beauty, justice, intuitive knowing and meaning.⁹⁹ But what the proper balance is for a man or woman's behavior in marriage, Payne does not make clear in her original book. Author John Eldredge, in a book that sold five hundred thousand copies, speaks in more poetic terms of three universal desires of a woman's heart and three of a man's heart. He says that a husband desires a battle to fight, an adventure to live, and a beauty to rescue. A wife wants to be fought for, an adventure to share, and a beauty to unveil.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Alan P. Medinger, *Growth into Manhood: Resuming the Journey*, 1st ed. (Colorado Springs, CO: Waterbrook Press, 2000), 34-38. He builds, from these, four things that men do and six qualities of manhood.

⁹⁹ Leanne Payne, *Crisis in Masculinity* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995), 35, 41, 73, 83, 125. Her work was originally published in 1985.

¹⁰⁰ John Eldredge, *Wild at Heart: Discovering the Passionate Soul of a Man* (Nashville: T. Nelson, 2001), 9-17.

Social researcher Shaunti Feldhahn, in two small books that sold over one million copies and have been translated into fifteen different languages, takes a statistical, empirical approach. Through numerous interviews, she arrives at statistical emotional differences, including seven for men and six for women:

Men would rather feel unloved than disrespected;
 Men often feel like imposters, insecure that their inadequacies may be discovered;
 Men feel a mental burden to provide;
 Men's well-being is profoundly affected by their women's sexual desire for them;
 Men struggle with images of other women besides their wives;
 Men enjoy romance but doubt that they can succeed;
 Men will spend significant cost to support their woman's appearance;¹⁰¹

Women have a fundamental insecurity about being loved;
 Women deal with emotions from the past all the time that cannot be dismissed;
 Women want emotional security even more than financial security;
 Women care more to be heard about a problem than the problem itself;
 Women don't want sex as much;
 Women want to look attractive.¹⁰²

Although Feldhahn does not prescribe distinguishing behaviors for marriage in these books, she believes that acknowledging these typical emotional differences should help husbands and wives love each other better.

From this sampling, it is clear that even among those committed to gender distinction in marriage and trying very hard to determine what that means, there is overlap but not complete agreement as to what such distinction looks like. The essences concern how they respond to each other. The practices are either home labor-oriented (bread-winning, caring for home and children) or broadly relationship-oriented (leading, deferring). Wilcox, who studies the role of gender distinction among those with a high

¹⁰¹ Shaunti Christine Feldhahn, *For Women Only: What You Need to Know About the Inner Lives of Men* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2004).

¹⁰² Shaunti Christine Feldhahn and Jeff Feldhahn, *For Men Only: A Straightforward Guide to the Inner Lives of Women* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, 2006).

view of biblical authority, finds the same two central components to the gender distinction of conservative Christians: husbandly authority and division of labor based on the husband having pre-eminence in the workplace and the wife having pre-eminence in the home.¹⁰³ Wilcox finds no precedent for this “separate spheres ideology” in earlier Christian tradition, calling it a nineteenth century innovation of bourgeois life.¹⁰⁴ Yet the belief in gender-derived division of labor in regard to the home persists.

The messages and teachings of this sampling from Christian popular literature reflect what conservative Christians teach. Survey evidence from as recently as the 1990s shows that the former, labor-oriented views constitute the beliefs of a majority of conservative Christians (as well as a significant minority of mainline churchgoers).¹⁰⁵ Among those actively involved in their churches, the percentage holding to labor-distinction goes up even higher.¹⁰⁶ Even more dearly held are the relationship-oriented convictions about husbandly “headship” and wifely deferral, granting the husband prerogative in decision-making and marriage leading. A 1996 survey reveals that about eighty-five percent of conservative Protestants endorse husband headship.¹⁰⁷ These are extraordinary percentages, given the cultural changes of the last half century and the

¹⁰³ Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands*, 57. Wilcox’s landmark study proceeds to examine practices in three domains: household labor, parenting and “emotion work,” that is, husbands attending to the needs of wives. He unfortunately does not investigate the practice of male authority in detail because the data from which he worked, the General Social Survey (GSS) and the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), did not include questions of male headship: *ibid.*, 95. Also, though thoughtful, Wilcox’s work suffers from a conception of emotional intimacy as only “work” for men and not a benefit to them. So he may get the cause-effect backwards, e.g. in a statement such as, “...emotion work...is increasingly the tie that binds together contemporary marriages,” *ibid.*, 158.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 58-59.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 83-84.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 194.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 95.

resulting shift to egalitarian attitudes.¹⁰⁸ Christian marriages truly are distinctive in views of gender.

This, then, is what Christians believe. But the link between belief and practice needs examination. Wilcox warns that conservative Protestantism is more ambivalent over gender role ideology than its biblically focused discourse would lead one to expect.¹⁰⁹ He cites research to the effect that, despite what they believe, conservative Christians do not practice high levels of male decision-making in their marriages.¹¹⁰ Mississippi State University professor of sociology John P. Bartkowski, in his study of a large Texas church, likewise finds a degree of heterogeneity on this count.¹¹¹ Clemson University associate professor Melinda Lundquist Denton finds the connection between gender role ideology and decision-making practices among conservative Protestants to be “loose.”¹¹² University of Notre Dame sociologist Christian Smith, well known for his contributions to the sociology of religion, serves as the director of the Center for the Study of Religion and Society. In his sensitive study of ordinary evangelical practice, Smith similarly finds “the final say of the husband [to be] more an ideological safety net than a routine reality.”¹¹³ As Oregon State University professor of sociology Sally K. Gallagher puts it, “their traditionalism is largely symbolic. In practice, most are

¹⁰⁸ This shift is documented in Melinda Lundquist Denton, “Gender and Marital Decision Making: Negotiating Religious Ideology and Practice,” *Social Forces* 82, no. 3 (2004): 1154. For one example (among many), in 1977, seventy-six percent of Americans believed that it was better for the man to work outside the home and for the woman to focus on the care of the home and family. By 1993, only thirty-seven percent did: Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands*, 4.

¹⁰⁹ Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands*, 11, 25, 73, 75.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 173.

¹¹¹ Bartkowski, ix, 6, 16, 122-127.

¹¹² Denton, 1151.

¹¹³ Smith, 185.

pragmatically egalitarian.”¹¹⁴ These statements, from a variety of researchers, cautioned a study examining Christian characteristics to focus on actual practice rather than stated beliefs.

Smith provides some reasonable explanations for this apparent discrepancy between faith and practice in the United States evangelicals. One is the impact of the surrounding culture’s progressively egalitarian values since the 1960s. Another is the stagnation of average real wages since 1973 which has sent wives into the workforce.¹¹⁵ Evangelical women are employed at rates similar to those of the general population and their median household income mirrors that of other Americans’.¹¹⁶ In navigating this reality, it is harder for a wife to focus solely on the home.

But some of these explanations about Christians’ gender practices may also point out a problem in the categories of the researchers.¹¹⁷ There may be more nuance in the meaning of “headship and submission,” than contradiction of position and practice among the Christians. Evangelicals in this country have had a long history of “mutuality” joined to the notion of husbandly headship/wifely submission in marriage.¹¹⁸ Gallagher traces the coexistence of equality and hierarchy back through Cotton Mather (1663-

¹¹⁴ Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity and Gendered Family Life*, 103; after Gallagher and Smith, "Symbolic Traditionalism and Pragmatic Egalitarianism: Contemporary Evangelicals, Families, and Gender," 211, 217, 223, 226-228.

¹¹⁵ Smith, 189-190.

¹¹⁶ Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity and Gendered Family Life*, 5.

¹¹⁷ In addition, *ibid.*, 13-14. Gallagher points out two other problems involved in many studies examining Christians’ practice of gender in marriage: narrowness of the samples and range of voices presented.

¹¹⁸ Denton, 1152, for example, finds an “apparent contradiction” between the 1998 Southern Convention resolutions that a woman should submit herself to her husband’s leadership and that men and women are equal before God. There is not necessarily a contradiction if one is a statement of activity and the other of ontology.

1728), the puritan who wrote one of the best-known commentaries on marriage.¹¹⁹ As Smith notes, “the majority of ordinary evangelicals believe that headship and equality are entirely compatible, not contradictory, commitments... Common constructions of male headship [are] primarily in terms of responsibility, accountability and self-sacrifice.”¹²⁰ Wilcox calls their masculine authority gender practice a “soft patriarchy,” noting that, according to conservative Protestant family experts, a husband should be careful not to “bully his wife” or “exercise tyranny” over her.¹²¹ So the leading-submitting that Christian couples are advised to practice is a considerate, voluntary relationship that includes the wife’s voice.

The Promise Keepers movement, similarly, employs a rhetoric of servant-leadership for the husband, oriented toward the family’s well-being. Though the movement’s leaders, in their keynote book, delineate the five “marks of masculinity” as assertiveness, self-confidence, independence, self-control, and stability,¹²² the charges and chapter headings given in its pages highlight forgiveness, sensitivity, denunciation of pride and adultery,¹²³ making a wife “conscious that she is more enjoyed and valued than his greatest achievements” and bringing her “joy and confidence as a woman...that frees

¹¹⁹ Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity and Gendered Family Life*, 20-21. Her term for wives in American Puritan practice and law was “subordinate partners.” Her survey of Colonial, First Awakening and Second Awakening social arrangements for women in ministry is similarly instructive of the nuance in gender distinction views.

¹²⁰ Smith, 172, 180. Elliot, *The Mark of a Man: Following Christ's Example of Masculinity*, 29, 112, forthrightly affirms no contradiction between headship and equality because “authority means sacrifice.”

¹²¹ Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands*, 60.

¹²² Bill McCartney and Gary Smalley, *What Makes a Man?: Twelve Promises That Will Change Your Life!* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1992), 83.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 5.

her to enjoy all that she is and can become.”¹²⁴ Founder and dominant spokesperson Bill McCartney preaches for “a guy to stop thinking about himself and start thinking about others,”¹²⁵ not exactly a dictatorial trait. The husband is to be the final decision-maker and leader in order to pay the wife attention and admiration, “because God made women to be loved.”¹²⁶ Likewise, according to the Southern Baptist Convention, the purpose of a husband’s leadership is to take initiative for the “wife’s spiritual, emotional and physical needs.”¹²⁷

Such headship, if enacted, might look merely symbolic because it so directly serves the needs of those submitting. But is it? This study’s interviews provided an opportunity to hear from husbands just how some of these Christian couples function, resulting in an alternate explanation.

What Does Gender Distinction do to Intimacy in Marriage?

Some writers argue that the ideology of husbandly authority and wifely deferral creates a climate of male domination and female subservience that discourages men from being expressive with their wives or, worse, promotes domestic violence.¹²⁸ More fundamentally, these authors believe that it denigrates women. For example, the late University of Chicago political philosopher Iris Marion Young identified wifely submission as a central harm of marriage itself and that which dooms the entire

¹²⁴ Larry Crabb, “Masculinity,” in *ibid.*, 49.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 12.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 48, 82.

¹²⁷ Jordan, 3.

¹²⁸ Wilcox gives a thorough sampling of authors theorizing this view in Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands*, 159.

institution as unjust.¹²⁹ Similarly, her look at gender distinction in household duties in the eighteenth century led first feminist Mary Wollstonecraft to declare, “Marriage is slavery.”¹³⁰ If these things are so, such an ideology would exert a powerful force against intimacy in a relationship.

Furthermore, many contemporary family scholars argue that egalitarian marriages, that is, those that consciously seek to suppress gender distinction in responsibilities in their relationships,¹³¹ should result in greater intimacy and high-quality, stable marriages.¹³² Wilcox and the late University of Virginia professor of sociology and director of the Marriage Matters Project Steven L. Nock explain why this is supposed to happen. First, common tasks should result in mutual understanding from shared experiences and so a richer emotional life. Second, the elimination of patriarchal authority removes social distance and so promotes intimacy. Third, egalitarian-minded men are expected to be more open to a counter-stereotypical masculinity conducive to emotional expression, and so closeness. For these three reasons, egalitarian marriages are predicted to be characterized by more “interpersonal closeness, trust, communication and mutuality.”¹³³

¹²⁹ Iris Marion Young, *Intersecting Voices: Dilemmas of Gender, Political Philosophy, and Policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 102, 105-106, 122.

¹³⁰ Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, *The Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert: An English Professor's Journey into Christian Faith* (Pittsburgh: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2012), 96.

¹³¹ There are various degrees of egalitarianism and some claiming an egalitarian view would still affirm some different responsibilities for men and women in marriage, but this paper adopts the more narrow definition of Wilcox and Nock, given above, for the sake of comparison. Defined so, less than ten percent of American evangelicals hold a thoroughgoing egalitarian view of marriage, according to Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity and Gendered Family Life*, 77.

¹³² Wilcox and Nock, "What's Love Got to Do with It? Equality, Equity, Commitment and Women's Marital Quality," 1322.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 1323.

But, in fact, research indicates no association between conservative Christians (or even religion in general) and domestic violence,¹³⁴ as well as only an ambiguous connection, at best, between egalitarian marriages, as defined above, and marital happiness.¹³⁵ Research suggesting the opposite, that making these kinds of gender distinctions improves marital intimacy, is intriguing. According to Wilcox, wives of conservative Christians report higher levels of appreciation, affection, understanding, and time spent together in their marriages.¹³⁶ In their particularly penetrating study of the social factors contributing to the decline of marriage, Wilcox and Utah State University researcher Jeffrey Dew find that religious wives and husbands in Louisiana who embrace “gender role traditionalism”¹³⁷ are much more likely to have high marital quality and are

¹³⁴ Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands*, 181. This is not to say that religion or teaching on Biblical authority is not used for abuse. Diane Langberg gives illustrations of such, for example, in Diane Langberg, *On the Threshold of Hope: Opening the Door to Hope and Healing for Survivors of Sexual Abuse* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1999), 120. The fact remains that higher incidence of domestic violence does not occur among Christians. As Langberg puts it, “There is no exact profile of a family in which [abuse] occurs.” But even beyond that, Wilcox found that, conversely, “churchgoing conservative Protestant men register the lowest rates of domestic violence of any group” in American households: Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands*, 207, 213.

¹³⁵ Studies on this point are conflicting. This review uncovered only four examples of a positive link: First, Paul R. Amato and others, “Continuity and Change in Marital Quality between 1980 and 2000,” *Journal of Marriage & Family* 65, no. 1 (2003). In the two surveys they examined, they especially note greater decision-making equality between spouses appearing to have improved marriage quality, p21. John Mordechai Gottman, *What Predicts Divorce?: The Relationship between Marital Processes and Marital Outcomes* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994), 57, says his observational research indicates that asymmetric power is more common among dissatisfied couples than satisfied ones. Kornrich, Brines, and Leupp, 27, also cite research showing that couples with more equal division of home labor are less likely to divorce. Finally, an Oregon study found unequal decision-making power in marriage predicted higher risk of death (and so, one assumes, marital unhappiness) in women: J. H. Hibbard and C. R. Pope, “The Quality of Social Roles as Predictors of Morbidity and Mortality,” *Social Science & Medicine* 36, no. 3 (1993): 217. On the other hand, a number of studies actually find that more gender-traditional women have happier marriages: Wilcox and Nock, “What’s Love Got to Do with It? Equality, Equity, Commitment and Women’s Marital Quality,” 1323, 1339. Rhoads, 260, concurs that research is mixed.

¹³⁶ Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands*, 206.

¹³⁷ “Gender role traditionalism” in their study means believing “families suffer when a wife works full time, the husbands’ job is to provide and the wife’s job is to look after the family, it’s best if the man works and the wife stays at home, childcare is primarily the wife’s responsibility, and women are better at

much less likely to get divorced.¹³⁸ There are other variables involved in their data that could account for this result, but it at least suggests that gender distinction may, in fact, cultivate rather than stunt intimacy.

In more general population data Greeley finds that the feeling of being valued by the spouse is a more powerful contributor to marital happiness than a sense of equality.¹³⁹ Sabino Kornrich, of the Center for Advanced Studies in the Social Sciences at Juan March Institute of Madrid, and Julie Brines and Katrina Leupp of the University of Washington, show that American couples with more gender distinct housework arrangements have more (and more vigorous) sex.¹⁴⁰ (They also provide a helpful explanation of how popular perception on this point came to be otherwise, in spite of a lack of empirical evidence.¹⁴¹) University of Wisconsin-Madison professors James A. Sweet and Larry L. Bumpass, the latter being also a former board member of the National Academy of Science's Board on Children and Families, show that these couples embracing gender distinction in housework are less likely to divorce.¹⁴² The link is not well-explored, but "it appears that women in marriages characterized by more traditional gender beliefs and practices are happier"¹⁴³ precisely because they have more emotional

childcare than men 'by nature.'": W. Bradford Wilcox and Jeffrey Dew, "Is Love a Flimsy Foundation? Soulmate Versus Institutional Models of Marriage," *Social Science Research* 39, no. 5 (2010): 693.

¹³⁸ Ibid., 696-697. This finding came from careful examination of three different data sets: The General Social Survey (GSS), which is conducted by the National Opinion Research Center and is one of the most widely used surveys of national attitudes and behaviors in the United States, the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), and the Survey of Adults and Youth (SAY).

¹³⁹ Greeley, 113. He did not distinguish between husbands and wives in this measure. I.e., it holds for both.

¹⁴⁰ Kornrich, Brines, and Leupp, 30, 42-43.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., 27.

¹⁴² Bumpass and Sweet, 18.

¹⁴³ Wilcox and Nock, "What's Love Got to Do with It? Equality, Equity, Commitment and Women's

intimacy with their husbands. The present study uncovered reasons for these puzzling, counterintuitive results.

How do Same-Sex-Attracted Husbands Experience an Intergendered Marriage?

Gender distinction is not usually a practice or consideration of gay men in intimate monogendered relationships because they tend to perceive themselves as more androgynous.¹⁴⁴ But it may be different for those with SSA who choose intergendered marriage. Mark A. Yarhouse led a longitudinal, mixed quantitative-qualitative study to gather information on the little researched phenomenon of intergendered marriages in which one partner reports same-sex attraction (SSA), which he called “mixed orientation” marriages. In his study, both partners in these unions reported satisfaction with their marriage. Such marriages are remarkable in overcoming not only internal struggles, but often external lack of support from culture¹⁴⁵ and church.¹⁴⁶ His work sheds light on how and why some of those with unwanted SSA function well in intergendered marriages, in spite of these obstacles.

Marital Quality," 1339.

¹⁴⁴ William M. Burdon, "Deception in Intimate Relationships: A Comparison of Heterosexuals and Homosexuals/Bisexuals," *Journal of Homosexuality* 32, no. 1 (1996): 81.

¹⁴⁵ James McCourt makes evident, albeit in specialized prose, the difficulties of life for SSA folks in the latter half of the twentieth century: James McCourt, *Queer Street: Rise and Fall of an American Culture, 1947-1985*, 1st ed. (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004). More recently, efforts of individuals with unwanted SSA to determine themselves differently, that is, to cultivate heterosexual desire in intergendered marriage, are now customarily seen as harmful: World Health Organization, "'Therapies' to Change Sexual Orientation Lack Medical Justification and Threaten Health" (Geneva: World Health Organization, 2012); Benedict Carey, "Psychiatry Giant Sorry for Backing Gay 'Cure'," *The New York Times*, May 18, 2012. Champagne Butterfield, 41-54, details the academic difficulties she faced in departing from this orthodoxy.

¹⁴⁶ The conservative Christian church's failure to support and, in some cases quickness to reject, SSA people, is covered, for example, in the twenty-first century in William P. Campbell, *Turning Controversy into Church Ministry: A Christlike Response to Homosexuality* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 7, 56; and, in the twentieth century, in Letha Scanzoni and Virginia R. Mollenkott, *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?: Another Christian View*, 1st ed. (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1978), 6-8. A recent, refreshing counterexample is found in Champagne Butterfield, 1-27.

“The most frequently occurring responses for...[what keeps] the marriage intact were a mixture of covenant/commitment and love for spouse.”¹⁴⁷ The subjects report that the best thing about their marriage is the sharing of values and faith, support, and love—in other words, intimacy.¹⁴⁸ This result implies that, as with any intergendered marriages, intimacy plays a large role in the longevity and quality of the union.

Currently, theorists and psychologists vigorously debate the nature of sexual orientation. The debate usually occurs between essentialists,¹⁴⁹ who hold that sexual orientation is a real thing that is a core component of a person’s self, and constructionists, who argue that sexual preferences are shaped by the social or historical context in which one grows up.¹⁵⁰ The contented people in these mixed-orientation marriages are definitely in the constructionist camp in assessing their sexual orientation. The Yarhouse follow-up study found a lowering in the mean reported level of SSA from prior to the marriage to later times as the marriage continued,¹⁵¹ which indicates change in sexual desires for some over time. In their extensive literature review, former Wheaton College professor of psychology Stanton L. Jones, along with Yarhouse, find that “nearly every study ever conducted on change of [sexual] orientation [by SSA people] found some evidence of change,”¹⁵² especially if the attempts were religiously motivated. Their recent rigorous

¹⁴⁷ Yarhouse, Gow, and Davis, "Intact Marriages in Which One Partner Experiences Same-Sex Attraction: A 5-Year Follow-up Study," 332.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 333.

¹⁴⁹ Not to be confused with gender essentialists, who hold that gender is a real thing that is a core component of a person’s self.

¹⁵⁰ Mark A. Yarhouse and Erica Sok-Nyee Tan, *Sexual Identity Synthesis: Attributions, Meaning-Making, and the Search for Congruence* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004), 4.

¹⁵¹ Yarhouse, Gow, and Davis, "Intact Marriages in Which One Partner Experiences Same-Sex Attraction: A 5-Year Follow-up Study," 330.

¹⁵² Stanton L. Jones and Mark A. Yarhouse, *Ex-Gays?: A Longitudinal Study of Religiously Mediated*

longitudinal study found that forty-five percent of those with unwanted SSA were able to experience positive change, and thirty-eight percent reached a state of contentment (conversion or contented abstinence),¹⁵³ a success rate higher than, for instance, pharmaceutical treatment of depression.¹⁵⁴ It is apparent, however, that the diminishing of SSA is not the experience of a majority. So it commonly remains an obstacle to closeness that intergendered couples with SSA have to overcome to succeed in the monogamy of marriage. This study's results help us understand how.

Change in Sexual Orientation (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), 78, 94. Several dozen studies on change in orientation were published in the 1950s-1970s, but serious research disappeared when DSM removed homosexuality as a disorder from its pages in 1973. In the last ten years, there has been a resurgence of such studies, with more rigorous standards and similar results.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 283. "Positive Change" meant a lessening of SSA. "Contented abstinence" meant SSA became either missing or present only incidentally and in a way that did not bring about stress. A heterosexual relationship was possible along with a lack of compulsion to act on SSA. "Conversion" meant substantial conversion to heterosexual attraction such that homosexual attraction was either missing or present only incidentally and in a way that did not bring about stress. The subject experienced either a successful heterosexual sex life or satisfactory heterosexual attraction in a dating relationship (not acted on due to moral constraints).

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 283-284, 403.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD FOR INVESTIGATING INTERGENDERED INTIMACY

In the face of marital breakdown in the United States, evangelical Christians provide a counter-cultural trend of marriage longevity,¹⁵⁵ as well as an increasingly peculiar practice of gender distinction in their marriages. Since deep intimacy is a key constituent of marital success,¹⁵⁶ and intergendered marriages that have overcome the opposite pull of same-sex attraction (SSA) in one of the partners are likely to present a sample strong in intimacy as well as a bed of sensitive reflection on gender, this study was conducted to discover how evangelical Christian husbands with a history of SSA experience emotional intimacy with their Christian wives in light of their gender distinctiveness. Answering the following research questions promised that discovery:

- 1) In what ways and to what extent does the Christian husband with a history of same sex attraction experience emotional intimacy with his Christian wife?
- 2) What gender distinction do these husbands perceive in their wives in marriage?
- 3) How is her gender distinction related to his experience of emotional intimacy with her?

¹⁵⁵ CHAPTER ONE: COUNTERING MARRIAGE DECLINE, Section Three: “Helping Marriage Look Up from the Bottom” of this dissertation lists references positively associating evangelical Christianity with flourishing marriages.

¹⁵⁶ CHAPTER TWO: A LITERATURE REVIEW..., Section One: “How Does One Speak of Intimacy and Measure It?” and CHAPTER ONE: COUNTERING MARRIAGE DECLINE, Section Two, “Getting to the Bottom of Marriage,” of this dissertation list references associating intimacy with flourishing marriages.

Study Design

A qualitative research¹⁵⁷ design augured illumination of the issues of this research problem, being especially appropriate for analyzing relatively unexplored research questions.¹⁵⁸ A plan of semi-structured, in-person, hour-long interviews of ten men, with field-tested interview questions, comprised the research.

Participant Sample Selection

Marriage practices involve both husband and wife of course, but the researcher interviewed only the husbands in order to narrow the focus of the study, given the subject and the researcher's constraints. This allowed for an examination of the influence of only one gender's practices on the other. Seeking the richest data on gender distinction's interaction with intimacy, while minimizing the variables involved, led to the following selection criteria for the men to be interviewed.

Each man had to be currently married to a woman for at least five years and self-report having a good marriage. This criterion created the best-practices terrain of this limited group on which to explore gender's impact on intimacy. Requiring five years greatly increased the probability of interviews from marriages that were working well. Furthermore, if there is an impact, more time spent in the intergendered relationship would expose more of it.

Each man, and his wife, had to self identify as evangelical or conservative Christian. This criterion came from the finding, explained in chapter one of this

¹⁵⁷ Qualitative Research can be said to formally originate with Barney G. Glaser and Anselm L. Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research* (Chicago: Aldine Pub. Co., 1967). The method seeks to understand, through rich description, the meaning people construct for their lives.

¹⁵⁸ Steven J. Taylor and Robert Bogdan, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: The Search for Meanings*, 2nd ed. (New York: Wiley, 1984), 5, 18.

dissertation, of the flourishing of marriages with religious faith. It also helped achieve more consistency across interviews on gender practices, as participants were more likely to share common views about gender if their beliefs were ostensibly derived from the same Bible. Finally, it limited the potential for disagreement on gender practices within the marriage. A greater unity achieved between husband and wife on this issue allowed the husband to focus on what the impacts were. With the exception of one (who converted to Christianity eight years ago), the husbands in the study had been Christians for anywhere from fourteen to forty-nine years.

Each man had to be married to a woman who embraces biblical teaching on gender distinction, as she understands it. Evangelical Christian wives are among those least likely to feel conflicted about having a unique role in a marriage as women, and so were selected as the key catalysts of the phenomena under study. Similar to the previous criterion, this requirement recognized how the wife's convictions would play a large part in the functioning of a gender-intimacy dynamic. If she were committed to gender distinguishing practice, she created a dynamic that would permit her husband or the researcher to evaluate its impact. At the same time, women who were highly motivated to practice gender distinction promised the most dramatic bearing, if there was one to be seen, of that distinction on intimacy.

Finally, each husband had to have experienced SSA, and perhaps acted upon them, in the past. A promising approach to determining a gender-intimacy impact would study relationships in which emotional intimacy flourishes despite great odds. This criterion provided such a sampling: marriages that had overcome a hindered sexual relationship to succeed. This criterion also allowed the participants to contrast their

current intergendered relationship to previous monogendered ones, holding an impact of gender difference in higher relief. Husbands who had the most relational distance to travel in experiencing intergendered emotional intimacy were considered likely to be the most sensitive to the consequences of their wives' womanhood. In short, their ability to compare made these men some of the most able guides to the impacts of gender distinction in marriage.

Within these purposeful parameters, diversity among interviewees was maximized to acquire the richest data. Interviewees of various ages (thirty-six to sixty-nine) were selected from a wide geographical spread (from Florida to Texas to Missouri to New York to Pennsylvania to Canada). Those couples chosen also had different numbers of children (zero to seven, including some from a previous marriage). They came from diverse denominational backgrounds (Presbyterian, Baptist, Brethren in Christ, and non-denominational) and social classes, with varying marital histories (divorced, widowed, one-marriage), sexual histories, and monogendered relationship histories (none to sexual episodes only to multiple long-term). Interviewees were identified through the researcher's network of contacts and acquaintances.

Data Collection

Data collection began with a demographic form filled out by interviewees before the interview to inform the data analysis: age, city and state of residence, denomination or type of church attending (and for wife), length of time in that church (and for wife), length of time as a Christian (and for wife), age of onset or awareness of SSA, extent of SSA activity in the past, number and duration of previous monogendered romantic relationships, number of years married, number and duration of any previous marriages

(and for wife). Additional information was garnered through conversations with the subjects outside of the interview and, in some cases, from website testimonies about them or by them.

Double field-testing honed the interview protocol before the actual interviews began. Private in-person interviews were then conducted over a five month period (July-November, 2012). The researcher decided not to provide the interview questions to the participants ahead of time in order to get the most candid responses. All interviews began with the signing of a consent form along with an explanation that the exchanges were confidential, that all actual recordings would be erased after the study, and that the researcher would only refer to them in print by pseudonym.¹⁵⁹ All interviews were conducted in person and captured by digital recorder.

After some initial wariness, respondents tended to forget that they were being recorded and opened up a great deal. Still, interviewing people about intimacy presented difficulties. Participants had not spoken before about some of their feelings. In addition, “most people, religious or not, have difficulty articulating their [marriage] ideals.”¹⁶⁰ They could consider the role of gender distinction in their marriage private or uncomfortable to discuss. The interviewer exercised great care to help each participant relax in order to draw out his views and experiences.

Beyond attention to the conducting of the interview, the interview questions themselves needed to mitigate the challenges of the subject while allowing each

¹⁵⁹ The ethics of using people as subjects requires such precautions to protect the participants from unintended harm, as per Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research*, 3rd ed., Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 83.

¹⁶⁰ Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity and Gendered Family Life*, 78, 151.

interviewee to explore intimacy and gender in his own words. The questions avoided any technical or abstract terms. For example, to explore dependence, the question was, “What would it be like for you if she were suddenly gone?” To explore companionship, the question was, “Tell me of a time when you looked forward to being with her.” The qualitative approach allowed these husbands to provide the categories of analysis.

The interview protocol had four parts: 1) how the interviewee experienced intimacy with his wife, 2) how the interviewee’s wife exhibited or practiced gender distinction, 3) if and how the two were connected, and 4) his “blue-sky” recommendation to other wives.

In speaking about intimacy, the first question asked was phrased so as not to suggest a particular answer or direction. This allowed the researcher to first hear what the participant considered to be the important constituents of their union. After that, the categories identified during the literature review were explored. The same procedure was followed in discussing gender distinction, first allowing the interviewee to describe what he and his wife considered to be “gender distinction according to the Bible,” then specifically inquiring into the division-of-labor and decision-making categories. The protocol was crafted to allow the interviewee to conceive of and speak of gender as a matter of essence or practice, whichever they thought was right.

After speaking of intimacy and gender, the researcher handed the interviewee a sheet delineating the terms of intimacy previously discussed. This tool was used in the third part of the interview to facilitate the question of the connection of gender to intimacy. The final question allowed the husband to speak his mind to other wives, giving recommendations that he thought would facilitate intimacy in marriages in general. The

interviews each lasted an hour or more. The complete matured Interview Protocol, including probing questions, may be found in Appendix I.

Data Analysis

The ten interviews accumulated a prodigious amount of rich description. Within three weeks of each meeting (usually sooner), the researcher personally transcribed each interview and then double-checked the results, twice comparing recording to transcription for accuracy. Beginning during the interview period, the transcriptions were combined with the demographic form data and analyzed by the constant comparison method,¹⁶¹ allowing ongoing revision of data categories. Axial coding of the transcriptions uncovered common themes and concerns, as well as contrasting views among the participants. According to qualitative method, theory was induced as the study progressed.

Because the question of cause is so important in regard to gender and intimacy, the study was conducted to permit a limited quantitative analysis within the qualitative framework to test cause within this sample. Rating facets of intimacy and gender distinction for each couple on a numerical scale, by gauging the frequency and intensity of their answers, allowed a ranking of couples on each variable and a consequent graphing of the relation of gender distinction to intimacy. In addition, this process afforded examination of the contribution of individual gender distinguishing venues to intimacy.

Another documental data source was also consulted in the construction of theory. Lurking in the background of these phenomena of Christian practice, of course, is the

¹⁶¹ The method was first proposed in Glaser and Strauss.

Bible.¹⁶² Researchers of evangelical Christian gender customs often stop at a review of popular books for background understanding of what Christians are thinking and refer to the Bible only indirectly. Inattention to the Bible itself as a source of understanding what is going on would be a shortcoming in a project of this kind. Thus the researcher joined the interview analysis with a careful study of gender in the Christian scriptures. The Bible study is included as Appendix IV.

This Bible study was carried out in a particular way. Qualitative research requires a suspension of judgment in studying people and their experiences. To truly understand the interviewees, a researcher must partake of that universe, seeking “insight...from the perspective of those being studied.”¹⁶³ So the Bible was read as an evangelical Christian would read it, striking the hermeneutical stance and holding to the exegetical principles that allows the closest proximity to the subjects’ thought. This stance included, for example, respecting the text as authoritative and consenting to each book’s own claims of authorship where made. Doing this was helpful for two reasons, one to assist in appreciating the categories in which interviewees (and their wives) may be thinking, but also, to allow the possibility that the Bible might have something to contribute to the analysis of the data.

Researcher Position

In this hermeneutically reflective age, it is important to identify one’s approach to meaning. University of Georgia professor Sharan Merriam, who writes and teaches on

¹⁶² “More than any other religious group, evangelicals...consider the Bible to be the most important source for knowing how God expects them to live” Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity and Gendered Family Life*, 66, 193 Table B.2.

¹⁶³ Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation*, The Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), 1.

qualitative methodology, categorizes four basic researchers' positions based on their views of reality:¹⁶⁴ Positivist, Interpretive-Constructivist, Critical, and Postmodern. The Positivist believes that reality is external and objective. The Interpretive-Constructionist maintains that reality is socially constructed, that there is no single observable reality, and that, consequently, one can only know what one experiences. The Postmodernist believes that there are only multiple realities, not one. The Criticalist is concerned with bringing about change, regardless of the nature of reality.

The researcher in this study believes that there is a supreme reality and an ultimate perspective from which one could ideally judge all claims to truth; reality is there. At the same time, the various positions enumerated above testify to very real limitations in apprehending that reality. The researcher must agree with the Interpretive-Constructivist that many of the ways that people interpret meaning are indeed socially constructed. In sympathy with the Postmodernist, the researcher must also confess his own limitations, as a being partial in perception, and with many faults, that leave him in serious need of humility and additional insight in his own perception of truth. The researcher hopes, with the Criticalist, that this research will result in intensely needed improvements in marriages. Because of the insights of all four of these positions, and mindful of them, the researcher engaged in this qualitative research. Through it and other sound measures, he expected to come closer to knowable and helpful reality about marriage.

Further biases are important to itemize, as all observations and analyses are filtered through the researcher's perspectives and values. The researcher sympathizes

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., ch 1.

with those who adhere to a revelation, such as the Bible, as a source of truth. These participants, either self-consciously or not, reject rationalist, empiricist, and skeptical epistemologies and instead found their knowing on a disclosure conceived as from outside the universe. The researcher does not believe these participants are necessarily on inferior intellectual grounds in doing so, or that they have no valuable insights to offer. This helped the researcher to respect those being interviewed in this study and to listen closely to them.

The researcher has also been married to a woman for twenty-three years, and thus approached the study design from the experience of a long-term intergendered relationship. He is open to the view that gender extends beyond sexual differences and that gender distinction can matter in a relationship.

Finally, the researcher was a man speaking to other men. This posed a severe gender bias, especially in a study about gender. Only half the story is possible in this circumstance.

The researcher is aware of these biases and how they shaped the investigation, but he does not believe that they obfuscated the data patterns. Rather, these beliefs and background enhanced their visibility. As the primary research instrument, the researcher can better probe the experiences of those that he values. On the other hand, the researcher took pains, through the use of systematic data collection procedures, multiple data points, and (feminine) peer review, to mitigate distortion caused by his own values and beliefs.

Study Limitations

The nature of the sample selection does not permit establishment of a general correlation between intimacy and gender practice. The criteria already selected for those

relationships that are supposedly intimate and in which gender distinction is practiced.

Thus, there was no control group. Rather, the study's purposeful sampling simply explored the possibility of causation among intimate relationships in which gender distinction is present and practiced, and how it might work.

Secondly, marriages are as varied as people are. In this study, the researcher may not have asked the right questions to get at intimacy. In spite of efforts at a comprehensive approach, it is possible that intimacy was there that was not addressed by these questions. Similarly, there may be alternative expressions of gender distinction that were not captured in the conversations.

Though the study revealed a high degree of intimacy in these marriages, it could not guarantee an absence of other factors, besides gender, contributing to that intimacy. It is possible that other features or practices in the marriage, not recognized by the researcher or the interviewees themselves, make the relationships intimate.

The study also cannot exclude the possibility of other paths to intimacy. Closely examining one catalyst to intimacy does not mean that there are no others. For example, this study does not comment on the experience of intimacy in egalitarian or monogendered relationships beyond the experiences of the men interviewed herein. Philip Colgan reports on problems that gay males have with achieving intimacy, but attributes these to the people around them not accepting or affirming the gay men's sexuality.¹⁶⁵ On the other hand, University of New Brunswick doctoral student Jacqueline N. Cohen, et al., assert that committed same sex relationships provide intimacy.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Colgan, 115.

¹⁶⁶ Cohen, Byers, and Walsh, 162.

Fruitful further study could compare levels of intimacy in men embracing monogendered relationships to men in intergendered relationships.

Finally, a significant limitation in this study arose from hearing only from the husbands of these couples, and not from the wives. For example, one can be less sure that a marriage is good if one only hears the husband saying so. Fortunately, husbands' opinions of the quality of a marriage tend to strongly agree with the opinions of their wives.¹⁶⁷ More importantly, the study's stated purpose was limited to the experience of the husbands being researched regarding their marriages' quality. A greater limitation than getting the single voice on the couples' happiness is that this research only got the husband's perspective on their views on gender. The wives' thoughts and opinions will certainly have influenced and shaped the husbands views, as in any good marriage. However, this study procured only one side of the story in not specifically hearing the wives' gender views. Further study would profitably delve into the feminine perspective, both on the wife's own practices and in response to the husband's views and practices.

As with all qualitative studies, readers must judge carefully what can be appropriately applied to their contexts.

¹⁶⁷ Andrew M. Greeley's study finds no difference between men and women in proportion to reporting whether their marriage is happy or "bottoming out," Greeley, 171, 141.

CHAPTER FOUR

FINDINGS ON INTIMACY, GENDER, AND THEIR RELATION

In the face of marital breakdown in the United States, evangelical Christians provide a counter-cultural trend of marital longevity, as well as an increasingly peculiar practice of gender distinction in their marriages. Since deep intimacy is a key constituent of marital success, and successful intergendered marriages that have needed to address, and overcome, the opposite pull of same-sex attraction (SSA) are likely to present a sample strong in intimacy, as well as a bed of sensitive reflection on gender, this study was conducted to discover how evangelical Christian husbands with a history of SSA experience emotional intimacy with their Christian wives in light of their gender distinction. Answering the following research questions promised that discovery:

- 1) In what ways and to what extent does the Christian husband with a history of same sex attraction experience emotional intimacy with his Christian wife?
- 2) What gender distinction do these husbands perceive in their wives in marriage?
- 3) How is her gender distinction related to his experience of emotional intimacy with her?

Nature of Participants

Ten husbands were interviewed in depth to answer these questions. These participants were united by a self-report of being Christians, of having a happy and enduring current marriage (the length of time married ranged from five to nineteen years, with the average being 11.3 years), and of being married to Christian wives who were

committed to gender distinction in marriage as they understood it to be taught in the Bible.

Within these parameters that defined the research sample, diversity among interviewees was maximized to acquire the richest data. Interviewees of various ages (thirty-six to sixty-nine) were selected from a wide geographical spread (New York: upstate and Manhattan, Missouri, Florida, Pennsylvania: rural and urban, Texas, and Ontario, Canada). The couples chosen also had different numbers of children (zero to seven, including some from previous marriage or adoption), though most had at least two. They came from diverse denominational backgrounds (Presbyterian, Assemblies of God, Southern Baptist, Brethren in Christ, non-denominational, and unassociated), with varying marital histories (divorced, widowed, single-marriage), sexual histories, and monogendered relationship histories (none to sexual episodes only to multiple long-term). Most of the interviewees, however, did have previous long-term monogendered unions before their intergendered marriages, which they used for comparison.

The sample turned out to be racially homogenous—all interviewees being Caucasian, but there was variation in social class and white ethnicity. Personality types also varied. A number of the men had networks of friends with unwanted SSA in similar circumstances. This was an unexpected bonus as many other stories besides their own informed their interview answers. Those husbands could be noticeably thoughtful in discussing the issues their interview raised.

All the couples had been Christians for a very long time (husbands: fourteen to forty-nine years; wives: fifteen to fifty-two years), with one exception (Ted and Audrey, at eight and six years respectively), giving a sense of stability to their stances. While

peoples' views can always change, the amount of time spent embracing this worldview made it more likely that interpretations and practices arising from it will be longstanding.

The complete interview protocol, included for the reader's reference as Appendix I, generated a large amount of data. Part I of the interview concerned intimacy. Part II concerned the practice and experience of gender distinction in the marriage. Part III explored any connection between the two. A fourth brief part invited these husbands' recommendations to other wives on fostering emotional intimacy in their marriages. Axial coding of the transcriptions yielded points of significance, arranged below under three headings corresponding to the research questions. An additional quantitative analysis section explores the possibility of gender-intimacy correlation within this sample. All names (husbands and wives) have been changed to preserve the study's promised confidentiality.

How Does the Husband Experience Intimacy?

Overcoming SSA by Intimacy

As predicted in the formulation of the sample set, SSA did indeed present an obstacle to intimacy in these marriages. As Edwin put it, "It is difficult because they [women] are different. And, in our case, where we had to work through that, initially without the sexual dynamic, it was really hard. Because there wasn't even...you couldn't kind of patch things up with sex." What was not expected was the repeated confession that this seemingly insurmountable obstacle of SSA was overcome through emotional intimacy. Even though that process was not addressed in the interview questions, most participants made some kind of statement, in passing, regarding how sexual intimacy with their wives grew from emotional intimacy with them:

Edwin: "Real sexual intimacy grew out of that emotional intimacy."

Fibeo: "[Titillation from] the female body...always felt like it was kind of a reach to me...times I got...excited...was all emotional and psychological."

Silva: "The tenderness, the patience of...my wife toward me [on our wedding night awakened me to] exploring one another..."

Ted: "I was very worried when I knew...that we were gonna be together, I was worried about that, you know, like how do I be with a woman and all that... And all that's been so minor."

Theo: "...When I'm sharing...with [my wife], I'm aware that it's building...it's doing something for us at an intimate level...like physically in the bedroom."

So the power of emotional intimacy to make marriages successful was confirmed in this unexpected way. Emotional intimacy is even able to overcome the obstacle of SSA in these intergendered couples, lending credence to Emotionally Focused Therapy's contention that "the most appropriate paradigm for adult sexual intimacy is that of an emotional bond."¹⁶⁸ This also comports with findings that a minority in mixed-orientation marriages experience a lessening of SSA over time.¹⁶⁹

Appreciating Many Facets of Intimacy

Another prediction, arising from the literature's multiple measures of intimacy,¹⁷⁰ was born out in the interviews: different men experience intimacy differently. The study construed intimacy as having six facets: unity, sharing, trust, dependence, feeling supported, companionship (besides identity formation, which emerged more as a matter of gender effects on intimacy and so is discussed below). The most prominent for these men, as measured by their first thought of the experience of a bond with their wives, was

¹⁶⁸ Susan M. Johnson and Leslie S. Greenberg, "Emotionally Focused Marital Therapy: An Overview," *Psychotherapy* 24, no. 3S (1987): 553.

¹⁶⁹ As cited in CHAPTER TWO: A LITERATURE REVIEW OF INTIMACY, CHRISTIAN GENDER UNDERSTANDING AND MIXED ORIENTATION MARRIAGES, Section: "How do Same-Sex-Attracted Husbands Experience an Intergendered Marriage?"

¹⁷⁰ The conclusion that intimacy has many facets is explained in CHAPTER TWO: A LITERATURE REVIEW..., Section: "How Does One Speak of Intimacy and Measure It?"

sharing, appearing in five instances. But each of the other facets also occurred as a first thought in at least one of the other five interviews. This variation among ten participants proves the need to cast a wide net when hunting for incidence of intimacy in marriages.

Unity, defined in Table 1 as the ability to resolve conflict, forgiveness, lack of quarreling, and agreement or solidarity regarding issues and tasks, was short-changed as an interview topic because, in the interest of time, it did not receive its own exploring question as did the others. Unity came up twice as a “first thought” and, later in the interview, when asked which of the seven experiences of intimacy, if any, was most helped by gender, the most common answer was unity. This may have been because unity was the first component on the list handed out for that question,¹⁷¹ but clearly unity’s repeated appearances indicate that it received inadequate interview coverage. This was a shortcoming in the method.

Otherwise, the intimacy questions, derived as they were from these different facets, did a good job of allowing the interviewees to speak in their own terms of the intimacy they experienced with their wives. Close listening followed by subjective gauging of intensity in the answers to these intimacy questions revealed sharing (in seven cases), as well as trust (in seven cases), and feeling supported (in five cases) to be most defining to these men’s experience of intimacy. The facets, as might be expected, were often interrelated. For example, deeper sharing happened because of greater trust, and dependence was one way of talking about a wife’s support. As Nick explained, “it is kind of like the domino effect.”

¹⁷¹ The list for question #11 may be found in Appendix I-Interview Protocol.

Wifely support was consistently important to these men in their relationships, but was very differently explained among them. The feeling of support arose from a great variety of actions by the wives:

- Fred: not mocking my weaknesses, prodding for change, giving advice, dealing with crazy extended family members
- Otto: doing things for me, keeping the house tidy, anticipating my needs
- Toseph: looking after home and me, acknowledging my work, listening to me
- Steven: not wanting to be buried with previous husband, praying together, wanting to serve God
- Fibeo: granting me decision-making status, supporting what I want to do, treating my extended family well
- Edwin: smiling at me on stage [when doing public speaking], affirming and allowing my work (and travel), affording me leadership in home, making home a refuge, going to a museum with me
- Theo: cheerleading me, having patience with time taken for work, challenging me
- Silva: allowing me to play, praying for me as a man in spiritual battle, demonstrating service to God, working with others
- Nick: thinking constantly about how to meet my needs, being interrupted for me, defending me, encouraging and challenging me, anticipating and redirecting my stress
- Ted: reading my need for encouragement, being affectionate, giving her judgments, making dinner, leaving sweet phone messages.

These items, in their breadth, would seem to have little in common but, experienced as support, they do all speak of the intimacy these men enjoy. They also highlight how the practice of helping in various ways features largely in what they appreciated about their wives, giving rise to an important category of gender distinction in the analysis discussed below.

What Gender Distinction Does He Perceive in His Wife?

Inherent Qualities and Deliberate Practices

The discussion of gender qualities and gender practices intertwined. Some participants were not initially comfortable speaking of inherent male or female traits. But, when they got more comfortable, every participant eventually espoused beliefs of

inherent, and sometimes pronounced, differences. The perceived differences in abilities or gender traits between men and women were difficult to summarize. There was little agreement among the interviews on that score, just as in the popular evangelical literature and the culture at large. However, the essentialism led to intriguing explanations of how their wives' gendered "practices" also depended on their being women. It was not just what they did, but who they were, doing what they did, that made a difference in these men's experiences. So discussion of inherent feminine gender traits entwined with conscious womanly practices.

Interestingly, this result comports with the biblical doctrine of gender, as explained in Appendix IV, which allows for essential differences but does not demarcate them. The Bible is clearer on action than on essence, and this focus on doing rather than being portrays gender distinctives as specialties in which to operate.

Two Expected Categories of Practice, Plus a Third

The interviews exhibited more agreement on undirected definitions of the wives' gender distinction practices. Table 2 lists, in order of frequency, categories and examples of answers given when the interviewee was asked how he saw his wife acting as a woman according to the Bible. This question allowed the interviewee to define the Bible's teaching himself in the practices or traits he cited. The table also includes responses to follow up questions, such as: what she or the couple thought she should be doing to act as a woman, and of a time when she was particularly womanly toward him.

Table 2 – “In what ways have you seen your wife acting as a woman...” Answers

Categories of answers to the question, “In what ways have you seen your wife acting as a woman, according to the Bible, toward you?” along with follow-up probing responses (including example responses) in order of frequency of response

*Most frequent responses:*¹⁷²

1. Deferring/Respecting: “Waits for me to lead,” “Surrendered control,” “Honors me as leader of home,” “Submits to my leadership,” “Deferential way of taking control,” “Embracing submission,” “Doesn’t mock but praises and shows deep respect for me (even when not deserved),” “Prefers me,” “Doesn’t tread on my masculinity,” “All the time...she honors me...with people,” “Does not belittle me.”
2. Family & home caring: “Cares for and protects kids and family,” “Took step back from her career for family,” “Patient w/my parents,” “Care of house and home,” “Very Proverbs 31,” “Raises children,” “Serves me and kids.”
3. Strong Helping: “Being a help-meet,” “Giving her thoughts,” “Asks great questions,” “Encourages me,” “Brings forth husband in me,” “Prays for me,” “Cares for me,” “Gently helps me,” “Takes things off my shoulders,” “All big decisions she’s ever made (for us) have been absolutely the best that they can be.”

Additional responses:

4. Exhibiting godly character: “Is faithful to me,” “Took on Bible learning.”
5. Ministering to others: “Serves food to many,” “Goes out of her way to help others,” “Nurtures many.”
6. Caring for her appearance (hair, dressing).
7. Supporting how we serve God together.
8. Being emotional (in a way that contributes to relationship).
9. Giving sexually.
10. Accepting her vulnerability: “giving me her fear.”

The response tallies of Table 2 suggest that the men see feminine gendered activity primarily in terms of submitting to or respecting their husband and caring for the home or family. These two comport with the two areas summarized from a review of popular and scholarly literature on evangelical practice in chapter two of this dissertation.¹⁷³

Another category of answer is also quite prominent in Table 2, based on frequency of response. Partnering practices, expressed variously as “giving her thoughts,”

¹⁷² Tallies were Deferring: 22 times; Home caring: 17 times; Strong Helping: 13 times. The additional responses occurred each 4 times or less.

¹⁷³ Section: “How do Conservative Christians Understand and Practice Gender Distinction?”

“challenging me,” “questioning me,” “praying for me,” “encouraging me,” “taking things off my shoulders,” and “making great decisions for us,” among other expressions, occurred thirteen times in the second part of the interview (and as many times in first part, as cited above). These responses do not fit into the authority category of deferring/respecting or the family and home care category of chore division. They also did not appear in the literature review. This third cluster, rising to assist in the husband in a task or calling, is important to these couples pursuing relationships of gendered distinction. Consulting the Bible on this point helped the researcher to give this a label. Placed in biblical language, God gave the wife the ability to uniquely be a strong helper¹⁷⁴ to the husband, bringing divine empowerment to his calling.

The interviewer probed as to whether this venue was a true distinction between husband and wife, rather than a mutual practice, and repeatedly received the reply that it was a true distinction. That is, the interviewees felt that their wives really did something for them in these things that they did not do for their wives, or at least not in the same way. If this is a principal part of gender distinction among Christians, the interview data rightly calls attention to it.

It should be remembered that this data is intentionally skewed toward one side of the marriage equation. The answers of Table 2 may make the marriage seem one-sided, but the men being interviewed were directed to speak of what their wives do for them, not what they do for their wives.

¹⁷⁴ APPENDIX IV: THE BIBLICAL PORTRAYAL OF GENDER, under Section: “Five Distinctive Assertions by the Bible about Gender,” Assertion Four “The Asymmetry of the Genders: Different Calls,” explains where this term, helper (or “help-meet”) comes from in the Bible.

Decision-making by Gender

When the interviewer explored the two big categories of gender distinctive behavior, probing became determinative to uncovering actual practice. The authority-deferring category of gendered behavior was investigated in the standard way, that is, through questioning about decision-making in the marriage. The initial response to whether the husbands had priority in decision-making was mixed: six gave a definite “yes,” two said “no,” and two said that decision-making was “very much joint.” These responses shifted to more affirmative upon probing, with only one husband credibly maintaining that he possessed no “trump card,” or final say, that decision-making was symmetrical. The data suggests that asymmetry in the relationship, with one partner voluntarily leading and the other voluntarily submitting, plays an important role in these Christians’ lives, and the decision-making question provided a rough indication of the degree to which this apparently important feature of gender distinction had developed in these relationships. What may be termed here, an authority asymmetry, however, includes more than just decision-making. Even the husbands that claimed to have no priority in decision-making still mentioned, at other points in the gender discussion, the importance of their leadership or their appreciation of their wives’ respect.

To the finding in previous research that couples speak about the husband being the leader but that he does not, in fact, ever exercise final say, the data of this study provides an explanation not encountered in the literature. Similar to the studies cited in chapter two,¹⁷⁵ even those participants in this study who affirmed husbandly priority in decision-making could not always immediately produce an example of “putting their foot

¹⁷⁵ Section: “How do Conservative Christians Understand and Practice Gender Distinction?”

down.” But elaboration showed that this is not because the husband’s leadership is “largely symbolic,”¹⁷⁶ or merely “an ideological safety net.”¹⁷⁷ Rather, there is a “rhythm” (both Otto’s and Theo’s word) to the decision-making in which, because the couples are mutually cognizant of their arrangement, the submitting happens much earlier than when the decision is actually finalized. So phrasing the question, as for example Sally K. Gallagher did in her research, as “Who usually gives in on contested decisions?”¹⁷⁸ is problematic. Emerging from the present interviews was a picture of wives yielding early in the decision-making process so that the need for husbands to overrule rarely arises:

Otto: “Yeah, it’s never in the context of, after we’ve discussed it, then, ‘I’m gonna over-ride you.’ We usually seem to pre-empt that much earlier in the conversation...right from the beginning, before she starts expressing her own views, very early on, she’ll say, ‘I’m gonna let you make that decision.’ And she’ll do that from the beginning. We don’t even have that long dialogue. And it’s funny: When she does that, I kind of know it’s coming. I’m not surprised by it.”

Fred: “There’s a little bit of tussling. And most of the time the issue goes away.”

Edwin: “It’s just in the letting go of her lists for me that I see her submission. She says, ‘That wasn’t what I planned, but okay, we’ll do that.’”

Theo: “I mean, I think that...there’s a sense of rhythm we have I think with that. And it is not often that we disagree. We may kick around ideas and things like that I think [and] oftentimes come to a sense of where we both feel like we’ve been heard, there’s some give and take...And usually [in] that process, that give and take and...that sort of coming together, there is actually agreement, even if there originally wasn’t. We had talked about that [my being the head] before. It’s just that every time a situation comes up, we don’t have to go through that again. When I say ‘rhythm,’ that’s what I mean. So, yeah, she would definitely say that she defers to me, as the head of our home...”

¹⁷⁶ Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity and Gendered Family Life*, 103; Denton, 1157; after Gallagher and Smith, “Symbolic Traditionalism and Pragmatic Egalitarianism: Contemporary Evangelicals, Families, and Gender,” 211.

¹⁷⁷ Smith, 185.

¹⁷⁸ Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity and Gendered Family Life*, 94.

Silva: “We have very clear-cut understandings that aren’t always articulated because there’s not a real need to, but just a oneness, an agreement, that as head, and her as wife, she has a deep respect for me, and trusts me, and I have a deep love for her and guard her...”

It would be a mistake to consider what these quotations describe as trivial or having little bearing on the participants lives day to day. These couples operate with a very real but inherent leading and submission that may not be visible to outside observers, analogous to the leading and following that transpires during formal dancing. It is very real to the dancers, but when it is done well, it is rarely noticed by onlookers.

Furthermore, it became evident that in some cases a wife was playing a submissive part in the relationship without the husband realizing it. The initial mix of responses that turned positive upon probing would suggest such. For example, one husband repeatedly denied having any priority in decision-making or possessing any final say, only to relate, later in the interview, a recent conversation between his wife and their two young children in which she instructed them, “Ultimately Daddy is the boss...in our family. Though we often make decisions together, at the end of the day, what Daddy says is always going to be what we go with.” Clearly, whether this husband has reflected upon it or not, his wife is enacting submission as a practice of her gender distinction.

Finally, several of the husbands, especially those with the higher intimacy ratings explained below, conscious of their wives’ submission, sought to correct what they considered to be a mischaracterization of wives who voluntarily submit to their husbands. In discussing gender-inspired submission, most of the husbands took the opportunity to adamantly assert that their wives are not weak:

Edwin: “She’s a strong leader personality...She’s very feminine. She’s a very strong woman; a strong feminine...Her submission to me is so very

strong.... If I get angry at anything, it's when people criticize her as being weak or not standing up for herself. Because she is not weak."

Silva: "Her frailty attracted me because it seemed contradictory to her strength. She is a strong character...She won't be curtailed [by others' timetables]... My wife is strong in opinion."

Ted: "But she's not a shrinking violet either at all. She's very outgoing...She gets very.... can be quite feisty about things..."

Fibeo: "...I don't feel like she's trying to take that away from me or put herself on an equal footing with....male-hood...Not that she's weak, because she's not at all."

Steven: "She doesn't depend on me for who she is."

Theo: "She sees the feminine as strong—that it's not weak...My wife is by no means a milquetoast...by any stretch. She's from New Jersey, so, you know..."

In the decision-making discussion of these interviews there was rather outspoken insistence of feminine submission being an expression of strength.

Gender in Dividing Household Chores

To the question of whether household chores were divided up according to gender, initial responses were again mixed. Six said "yes," and four said "no." Perhaps these answers reflected cultural shifts of the last decades and the resulting pressure to appear fair. For, upon probing, every one actually did divide up some chores by gender. Similar to the general population, the men do differently than what they think in this area. A Boston College study found that only thirty percent of fathers who thought they should share child care equally with their wives actually did so.¹⁷⁹ Table 3 shows how, albeit, amidst qualifications, the wife's specialties always had to do with the home and children.

¹⁷⁹ Coontz, "Why Gender Equality Stalled."

Table 3 –Division of Chores by Gender

	<u>Husbands do...</u>	<u>Wives do...*</u>
Nick, Otto,		
Toseph, Ted:	Bread-winner Dad,	Care-for-home Mom
Steven:	Bread-winning is equal,	but she feels responsible for home
Fred:		Meals
Fibeo:		Primary cooking
Edwin:		Care of home, décor, kitchen
Theo:		Kid care, but not much else.
Silva:	Pay bills, [†] cook, keep house	

* Again, the wife column is more populated, being the focus of the interviews. Most qualified these answers, saying they also do some of the work of the home.

† Though Silva and Alexa intentionally did not divide chores up in traditional ways, he did acknowledge his taking on of money management to be gender-inspired.

The one significant exception to standard chore division was in Silva's marriage: "We rebel against Ozzie and Harriet." But it should be noted that Silva's was the one couple in the study with no children. Most of the participants had two to three children, a situation that allows for less flexibility in household chores, and one that tends to force the question of whether gender does and should play a role in home jobs division.

The idea came forth several times that, as couples divide labor in the home, there may be more important considerations than ability: "Just because we can do something, it doesn't mean we ought to do it," "In natural talent, she's much better with numbers, and I'm good in the kitchen but..." In other words, at times, gender trumped gifting in these couples' decisions about labor in the home.

Is There a Correlation Between Gender Distinction and Intimacy?

Although the overall method of this research was qualitative, the matters under discussion permitted a numerical scoring that yields to a restricted quantitative analysis. While the selective nature and small size of the sample would constrain the meaning of

any correlation found, intimacy scores and gender distinction scores may be compared to throw additional light on the dynamic between the two.

Assigning Degrees of Intimacy

All of the participants' marriages are good marriages. Besides the self-reporting of such as a criterion in the sample selection, and besides the fact of continued stability, in spite of SSA, of the relationships (from five to nineteen years, and counting), the interview answers displayed healthy growing intimacy. Nonetheless, within this healthy group, especially through comparison of responses, degrees of intimacy could be discerned. These degrees were assigned, as objectively as possible, as follows.

As mentioned above, sharing was the prominent experience of intimacy for this study's sample. Items uniquely shared with wives almost always included the bad: fears such as job insecurities; weaknesses such as points of temptations or unworthiness; troubles such as HIV status or struggles with the kids; and things gone wrong such as extended family deaths and dysfunctions. Based on the vulnerability exhibited in the recounted things shared, the researcher assigned a degree integer from 1 to 4, providing a measure of how intimately each husband shared with his wife.

Similarly, dependence awareness, measured by the question, "What would it be like if she were suddenly gone from your life?" ran the gamut from "It would be hard but I'd get over it" to "Functional loneliness forever—I would never remarry." Based on these answers, the researcher assigned another degree number of 1 to 4 as a rank of how intertwined their lives were.¹⁸⁰

¹⁸⁰ Dependence scoring was tricky. It did not discriminate between unhealthy dependence, in older literature termed "codependence," and the healthy interdependence of married life, but the researcher could not discern a harmful dependence in the expressions of grief at the thought of spousal loss. Nor do the participant's answers necessarily reflect what they would actually do if their wives were suddenly gone.

The trust question, “Rate your trust of each other on a scale of one to ten,” produced a narrow range of values—all participants rated their marriages somewhere from eight to ten, except Toseph, whose wife had difficulty trusting him to remain faithful (a justifiable difficulty, he said, given their past), so he rated the trust between them as a seven. But the men’s subsequent elaborations on expressions of trust were quite helpful in showing the strength of their marriage trust. They ranged from the practical: that the spouse has the checkbook and the other’s passwords, to the relationship-oriented: that they would work out difficulties, that their motives were good even when the other is hurt, that they won’t use their weaknesses against each other, and that the spouse would never leave. These, in conjunction with the interviewee’s self-reported score, allowed a trust ranking. A score was similarly assigned to their companionship. Feeling supported proved difficult to gauge, as its answers were so wide-ranging and pervasive, and was not scored. As mentioned above, unity did not have its own probing question and so, also, was not scored.

A final negative score was recorded if, during the interview, the interviewee gave indications of a limitation in intimacy, such as, “She sometimes struggles to be vulnerable with me,” “I need to guess when we can have sex,” or “We don’t ever sit and cuddle.”

All four individual facet scores (sharing, dependence awareness, trust, and companionship),¹⁸¹ ranging from 1 to 4, were added together, along with the possible intimacy-lack score (again, from -1 to -4), yielding a composite intimacy score with a

But the replies did show how much the men thought it would hurt to be without their wives. So the score assigned gauges that as a measure of dependence.

¹⁸¹ In addition to unity and support, identity formation is treated as a feature of gender impact and so was not individually scored.

possible range of 0 to 16.¹⁸² Again, these scores are relative within the already established group of healthy marriages.

Reckoned this way, degree of intimacy did not correlate with any of the demographic data collected on the participants. There appeared to be no discernible pattern of intimacy with denomination, age, length of time as a Christian, or any of the other noted characteristics of the couples. Even length of time married was not related to degree of intimacy achieved, except perhaps that the lowest score belonged to one of the least mature marriages (six years).

Assigning Degrees of Gender Distinction Practice

As with intimacy, breaking down the aspects of reported marriage practice permitted integer scoring of how much gender custom played a role in the relationships. Again, by the criteria of sample selection, all of these couples saw the wives as committed, in some manner, to gender distinction as they understood the Bible to teach it. Still, there were discernible degrees of gendered behavior among the marriages and this behavior was scored as objectively as possible. Starting with the two major categories of gender distinction which emerged from the participants' first answers, wifely deferral and household chore division, an integer from 1 to 4 was assigned for each category. Based on the discovered third category of Table 2, a strong helper score was also registered. The three gender scores were added together, along with a subtracting 1 to 3 score for indications during the interviews of a lack of gender distinction.¹⁸³ As with intimacy,

¹⁸² The actual scores spanned an eleven point range from 6 to 16: 6, 8, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

¹⁸³ The resulting composite scores, in a possible range of 0 to 12, were 1, 1, 5, 6, 9, 9, 10, 10, 10, 11.

gender distinction so measured did not strongly associate with any of the demographic variables collected on the participants.

Comparing Gender Distinction Scores with Intimacy Scores

Figure 2 shows a scatter plot of the two composite scores. The graph plots rising intimacy with gender distinction, with each composite score normalized to a scale of zero to ten. The graph shows how, in this research sample, gender distinction and intimacy are indeed positively correlated (correlation coefficient $r = 0.5$).

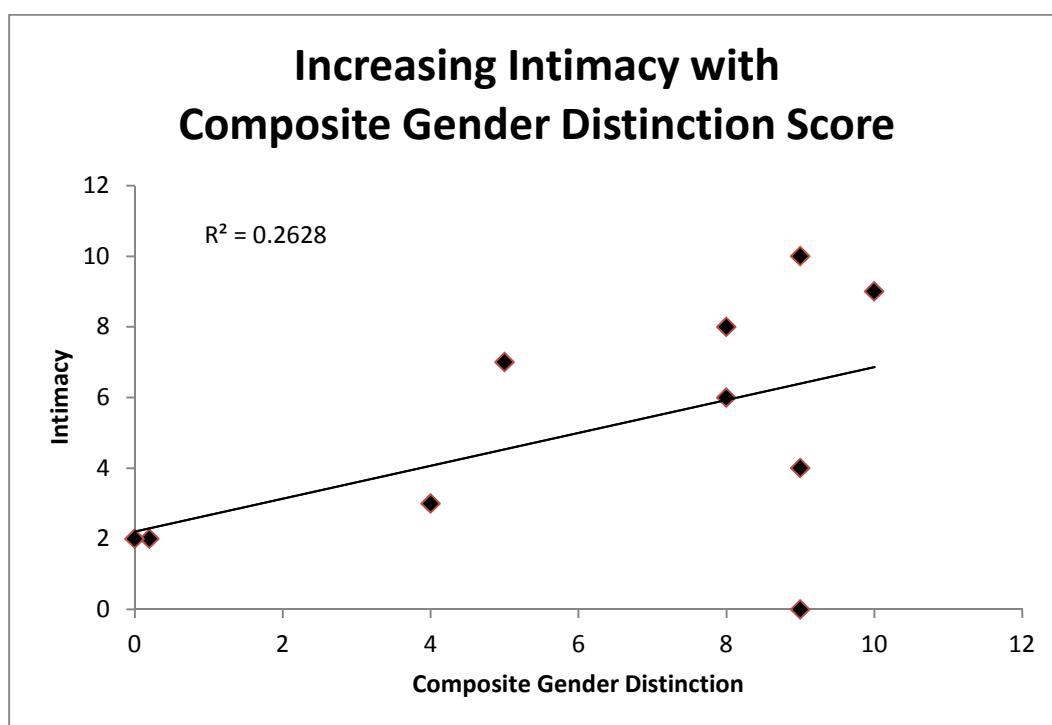


Figure 2: Increasing Intimacy with Composite Gender Distinction Score

That correlation is evident within this small sample size is significant, suggesting an association of gender distinction and intimacy. Even in this group, already selected for

both intimacy and gender distinction, the visibility of an association suggests a dynamic vital to growth for these couples.

It should be noted that the lowest intimacy score (zero in Figure 2, lying along the Gender Distinction axis), which seems to skew the graph and lessen the correlation, belonged to the husband youngest in age (thirty five) and who also had one of the youngest marriages (six years).

As the gender distinction score was composed of three contributing scores, an Authority score, a Home Chore score, and a Strong Helper score, scatter plots may also be constructed to test predictive power, within this sample set, of the individual components of gender distinctive practices. These graphs are included in Appendix II to suggest direction to possible future quantitative exploration of these relationships.

How Does Gender Distinction Relate to His Experience of Intimacy?

The conversation as to why gender and gendered practice mattered, in the men's own words, provides the most fertile and fascinating elements of this research. Insights came from all participants, not just those with the most gendered or most intimate marriages. All had noteworthy things to say about what made their marriages work.

“Reasonable Facsimile:” Comparing Monogendered with Intergendered Unions

The goal of this study was to explore the relationship between gender and intimacy within these unions. One way to determine a connection was to ask the interviewees to compare or contrast their monogendered relationships with their intergendered ones. When the interviewer did so, the universal feeling among these husbands, expressed by all interviewed, was that they could not achieve in a monogendered relationship what they experienced with their feminine wives. The

question, “How would this be different if you were with a man?” elicited portrayals of monogendered unions as a “reasonable facsimile”—Fred’s term—which could achieve some level of intimacy and love, but which for these men ultimately was limited. As Toseph described it, monogendered unions felt like trying to thread a metric screw through an English nut: It seemed to work when you first started, but eventually resulted in a bind, harming both screw and nut. As Nick phrased it, “That’s not to say there...isn’t an ability to be compatible [with a man. But] I think in the deepest way...to be compatible, what I’ve experienced with Laura...I could never have had that, and didn’t have that [with a man].” Or, as Ted reflected, “I mean, I learned things...about people. There are certain things you can take with you I’ve learned...but... looking back on it now, I think that it [was]...shallow.”

Probing as to exactly why these husbands felt that the intimacy with their wives could not be achieved with a man brought forth a variety of reasons, categorized with sample answers in Table 4.

Table 4 – “Why not achievable with another man?” Answers

- 1) Lack of Differentness Itself: “A person has to bring something different to the relationship.” “Not complementary.” “Women have sense that guys don’t.” “I have grown to appreciate her womanness” (sic). “Richness comes from differentness.”
- 2) Presence of Competition: “More competitors than allies.” “Tend to go in separate directions.”
- 3) Lack of Growth: “Felt more insecure as a man.” “Kept me emotionally immature.” “She’s affirming me as the man that I am...in those areas that, where I was wounded as a kid, God’s used Laura to affirm that in me...”
- 4) Absence of Difference – In Emotion: “Lack of emotional gut stuff.” “Not a fit together emotionally.” “Limits emotional depth.” “...Something lacking.” Or, conversely, a woman “brings a lot of life.”
- 5) Absence of Difference – In Virtue: “Men are goofy.” “We men are all a little bit selfish.” “Never had the fruit that I have w/her.”
- 6) Loss of Child-bearing: “lose the connection in creating a human being together.”

Actually, there were seven categories of answer, not six. Not included in Table 4 are the religious reasons the interviewees sometimes gave, such as “[The monogendered relationship] brings me to bow before another Head besides Christ.” “It does not create something reflective of God.” “I cannot find out who God is.” The exclusion of these poignant responses in the table is not to say that they are unimportant. In fact, for these Christian participants, they are inseparable from other reasons. But, as this research focused on the possible generic benefits of gender on intimacy, the interviewer guided the interviewee, upon receiving such responses, with the question, “Why do you think that God designed it that way?” or “What have you experienced that makes this way good for you?” The interviewees were willing to consider these questions because, if God designed something to do, one could expect to identify benefits accrued from doing it. Their answers were enlightening.

“It’s her womanhood:” The Light of Gender Multiplied through Facets of Intimacy

The later part of Section III of the interview gave the interviewees opportunity to expound positively upon what was stated negatively in Table 4. The six kinds of reason were explained more fully when the interviewer re-visited different experiences of intimacy in detail. In fact, breaking intimacy down into its different facets generated considerable elucidation of a gender-intimacy link. Table 5 catalogs interview answers regarding how gender distinction contributed to intimacy, organized by the six kinds of reasons identified in Table 4. When all the interviews are considered together, several of the distinct kinds of reasons emerged for each facet of intimacy and spanned issues of motivation, practice, cause and particularities of gender differences themselves. This is why they thought that gender (essence or practice) mattered.

Table 5 –How Gender Distinction (practice or essence) Fosters...

<u>Facet</u>	<u>Reason</u>	<u>Illustrating quotations</u>
1. ...Unity?		
a. From Differentness Itself:		“There’s a way to complement each other.” “We’re not ‘partners’...that complementariness of our gender ...that’s where our unity comes from. It’s in her role and my role, coming together that create unity.”
b. From Absence of Competition:		“It’s not competitive.” “It’s not shoulder to shoulder. So, like if I was a soldier in a war—like I was in Vietnam—you can have a union in a battle...certain kinds of union. But you can’t have what you have with a woman who’s willing and ready to be a woman. Because that unity is something different.”
c. From Difference In Virtue:		“[My intergendered relationship] allows me to let my guard down.” “Her...gentle spirit, it invites me in [to a place of] security [that] unites us.”
d. From Resulting Growth:		“Her femininity makes me want to do more...pulls me to where I would want to please her.” “I have a sense of being drawn to cover her.” “Woman is going to call out man in me to protect her.”

Table 5 (continued): How Gender Distinction (practice or essence) Fosters...

<u>Facet</u>	<u>Reason</u>	<u>Illustrating quotations</u>
2. ...Sharing?		
a.	From Differentness Itself:	"I share with a woman...to find out how womanness (sic) responds to this."
b.	From Absence of Competition:	"That's kind of tied in with trust. I trust her so there's really nothing that I don't [share]... [because it's] not a competitive thing. Like the things that really are at the heart of what makes you tick, on the inside, I don't think I would have revealed that to [a guy]." "Her softness pulls me...There's a level of vulnerability I'll choose to let Melanie into [that draws us together]." "Because Sandra is committed to me as my wife, as a woman...I can trust her...which then opens up my ability to share with her."
c.	From Difference In Emotion:	"Most women have the ability to understand and feel things at a different level from men so I get a deeper connection from her perspective."
d.	From Difference In Virtue:	"A different makeup, her womanhood...increases my understanding and has helped to unravel lies about me."
e.	From Resulting Growth:	"I can share regarding my SSA and she helps me toward growth, which wouldn't happen with a man."
3. ...Trust?		
a.	From Differentness Itself:	"There is a trust on her side...she has to trust me in my masculine role."
b.	From Absence of Competition:	"Because she is not gonna try to one upmanship me in everything, compete, have the upper hand, so I trust..." "[With her], the Lord is saying, 'You can let your walls down even more... [so we] become more one.'"
c.	From Difference In Emotion:	"Her sensitivities...give me room to risk things that with a man I would never risk."
d.	From Resulting Growth:	"Because of her trust [of me], I trust God more than I once did."

Table 5 (continued): How Gender Distinction (practice or essence) Fosters...

<u>Facet</u>	<u>Reason</u>	<u>Illustrating quotations</u>
4. ...Dependence on her?		
a.	From Differentness Itself:	<p>“It’s... [a] greater place,...being dependent...upon the other, not of the same.”</p> <p>“There’s no one I depend on on planet earth more than I depend on Laura. And I think it has everything to do with the fact that we complement each other...because she’s a woman and I’m a man. I couldn’t depend upon a man in the way that I depend on Laura, no. I don’t think that that’s possible. I could depend on a man. I don’t think it would reach the depths that it does with Laura.”</p> <p>“I wouldn’t be dependent on a guy for [the same things].”</p> <p>“She considers that her womanly duty to [do things for me, handling chores and children, so] I depend on her to do that.” “I depend on her...because...of her desire to be who God’s designed her to be: as a... homemaker.”</p>
b.	From Difference in Emotion:	<p>“The emotional [interdependence] I have with Melanie is more about me giving something away.”</p>
5. ...Being Supported?		
a.	From Differentness Itself:	<p>“Her acts of service [as a woman] support me.” “I feel supported, edified...She holds me up...and she sees that as her role.”</p>
b.	From Difference In Virtue:	<p>“She’s very much an undergirding support of everything I do, and very strong...It’s all very feminine. There is nothing masculine about her strength, which I love. I find some level of security and support in that.”</p>
c.	From Resulting Growth:	<p>“Starting from a place of...failure, Alexa has helped me and helped support me... [to know that I haven’t failed in manhood]-and it’s her womanhood.”</p>

Table 5 (continued): How Gender Distinction (practice or essence) Fosters...

<u>Facet</u>	<u>Reason</u>	<u>Illustrating quotations</u>
6. ...Companionship?		
a.	From Differentness Itself:	<p>“That thing that's missing...she supplies.”</p> <p>“The true companionship, I think, is very much complementary: My masculinity and maleness and her femininity and femaleness, being a woman.”</p>
b.	From Difference In Emotion:	<p>“We like to talk and laugh and sometimes just get pretty silly, in ways that I wouldn't do with a man...It wouldn't be the same thing. I mean, with a guy, sure you can laugh, you can have a good time, but you know with a woman sometimes you can just get really silly. You know? And it's more fun.”¹⁸⁴</p>
7. ...Identity?		
a.	From Differentness Itself:	<p>“[Because] we complement each other...I had a... secure identity.” “To depend on her makes me more me.”</p>
b.	From Absence of Competition:	<p>“I don't feel like she's trying to take that away from me or put herself on an equal footing with....male hood...I don't think that she tries to steal my identity.”</p>
c.	From Difference In Virtue:	<p>“Her femininity has very much enhanced my masculinity.”</p>
d.	From Resulting Growth:	<p>“It is her desire to help me become more of the man that God wants me to be. That couldn't happen with a man.”</p> <p>“Alexa called out of me...to watch over. My relationships with men were [having] one to watch over me... I am called out by her being a woman.”</p>

¹⁸⁴ This unusual point of companionship, silliness, was mentioned by two different husbands (Fibero, Silva) as a gender-distinctive point. It is interesting as an indication of openness.

As previously stated, answers of the seventh type of reason, ones involving the religious motivations of the interviewees, were not included in Table 5. These answers included reasoning such as: “Gender distinction builds unity because we find out who God is together through doing marriage this way,” or “Gender distinction builds dependence because God created it to be that way,” or “Gender distinction builds feelings of support because I know God is going to bless [doing it this way].” God still comes up in the table, of course, as a Character in their motivations.

The answers of Table 5 suggest many ways gender distinction could cause intimacy. As stated earlier in the gender results section above,¹⁸⁵ the discussion of inherent feminine gender traits and conscious womanly practices intertwined, and both seemed important to what gender distinction meant to the husbands. The interview question, “How does her womanhood effect X?” was phrased to allow the participant to choose to answer along the lines of essence (her being a woman in contrast to being a man) or practice (what she does to be feminine). As the categories of the table show, both played a role in how these men perceived the ingredients of their intimacy.

These, then, are the results of the interviews. The responses left no question that these husbands have found an intense intimacy through intergendered union, and that the womanhood of their partners has played a critical part in the depth of that intimacy—they would say an indispensable part. They speak of what she does, as well as who she is, as determinative in bringing them a securing, supportive unity, a trusting, sharing companionship, and an identity-forming interdependence.

¹⁸⁵ Section: “What Gender Distinction Does He Perceive in His Wife?”

CHAPTER FIVE

DOES SHE MATTER?

According to long-time marriage counselor and Mars Hill Graduate School professor of counseling, Dan B. Allender, “The goal of marriage is intimacy, union, oneness...In the interplay between like and unlike, something occurs that dispels loneliness.”¹⁸⁶ Intimacy is certainly at the heart of a healthy contemporary marriage. But how much does it have to do with “the interplay between like and unlike,” as Allender suggests? With the institution of marriage in steady decline,¹⁸⁷ both in long-term falling rates of marriage as well as rising rates of divorce, and evangelical Christian marriages countering these trends, the question arises as to why Christians achieve better marital success. This study illuminated a prominent yet counter-cultural feature of those marriages. Focusing on the Christian husband’s experience of intimacy, in light of one of the Christian’s increasingly peculiar emphases—marital gender distinction—revealed how these relationships foster the intimacy that is so important to longevity in marriages.

Furthermore, men with a history of same-sex attraction (SSA) or of monogendered relationships, and who have entered into Christian intergendered marriages lasting five years or more, were considered a likely bed of sensitive reflection on any difference that gender makes in a relationship. If these intergendered unions have

¹⁸⁶ Dan B. Allender and Tremper Longman, *The Intimate Mystery: Creating Strength and Beauty in Your Marriage*, Expanded ed., Intimate Marriage Series (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2009), 18.

¹⁸⁷ As Stephanie Coontz summarizes her historical survey of matrimony, “everywhere marriage is becoming more optional and more fragile:” Coontz, *Marriage, a History: From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage*, 4, 306.

overcome the opposing pull of SSA, they were also apt to present a sample strong in intimacy. So this study was conducted to explore how evangelical Christian husbands with a history of SSA experience emotional intimacy with their Christian wives in light of their gender distinctiveness.

The following research questions were proposed to guide this exploration:

- 1) In what ways and to what extent does the Christian husband with a history of same sex attraction experience emotional intimacy with his Christian wife?
- 2) What gender distinction do these husbands perceive in their wives in marriage?
- 3) How is her gender distinction related to his experience of emotional intimacy with her?

In short, does she matter? Does the “she-ness” in the “she” matter? A group of ten such husbands, diverse in place of residence, denominational background, age, and relationship history, were interviewed in depth to delve into these questions, using a qualitative research methodology.

The Qualitative Researcher’s Posture

Many simply presume that gender distinction limits rather than promotes intimacy in marriages.¹⁸⁸ Indispensable concerns for the cause of gender equality may arouse skepticism of results casting gender distinction in a favorable hue. In light of the patriarchal overtones and the threat of subjugation in talk of a husband’s authority or a wife’s domestic chores, it may be considered utterly backward to respect some of the choices these couples have made, or to consider potential benefits in such phenomena. But qualitative research requires a questioning stance with regard to even our own

¹⁸⁸ As Coontz casually remarks in one description, for example, “The doctrine of difference inhibited emotional intimacy,” *ibid.*, 189. Other illustrating statements may be found on 178, 181, 184, 188.

position and open-mindedness toward the data encountered.¹⁸⁹ The demands of the method require rigorous reservation of judgment in order to construct theory as it emerges. Such was the approach of this study.

Furthermore, the specter of casting happily monogendered couples as second class citizens, or worse, the fear of preventing the right of such couples to marry, may cause aversion to the idea that intergendered marital bliss is achievable by a husband with a homosexual past. But, again, for the purpose of learning, it is critical to listen without denying what these husbands say that they feel. During the interviews, the subjects showed no sign of painting a rosy picture of their lives because they had become invested in a certain lifestyle, or of simply saying that they experienced happiness with their wives to justify the life-choices they have made. Rather, authenticity characterized the discussions. The men were frank about the shortcomings of their intergendered relationships. They conveyed little bitterness toward previous partners. They were honest about their temptations and personal foibles. Their answers also reflected years of contemplation and comparison between their intergendered relationships and their monogendered ones. A reader's personal desire to secure gay marriage by legalization, it should be noted, is not incompatible with the acceptance of these men's experiences and even some of their interpretations of those experiences.

To appreciate this research, then, it is essential to adopt, however uncomfortable, the qualitative researcher's posture, to tread the path where the results lead. And that path grants credence, allowing that these husbands really have experienced what they say they have. The results, thus allowed to speak, lead to three conclusions, one respecting the

¹⁸⁹ Merriam, 17, for example.

power of intimacy, a second relating to the paths that Christian marriages take in esteeming gender, and a third regarding the dynamics of gender-fostered intimacy.

The Power of Intimacy

In a striking way, these interviews confirmed the literature's consensus on the power of intimacy to build successful marriages, namely in the reports of how physical intimacy for these men grew from emotional intimacy. Even the obstacle to closeness that SSA presented was overcome in these marriages by the experience of an emotional bond with a woman. Consequently, the interviews were an unexpected joy to conduct. Simply to hear men talk about how they love their wives was refreshing. Nick used the word "amazing" ten times to describe Laura and what she did for him. By the end of Steven's interview, he had remarked seven times how much he loves spending time with Madeline. In light of the many problems that plague marriages today, it was delightful to hear men merely delighting in their wives. This fact should encourage those researchers who study intimacy as a key to marriage longevity, especially if they are conceiving of the experience of closeness in all its diversity of expression.

The variety of intimacy measures from the literature reviewed in chapter two suggested intimacy to be a many faceted thing, and this guided the design of the interviews. The results bore out the wisdom of that decision. The intimacy these husbands shared with their wives was rich and sundry. From the first question, soliciting their thoughts on what comprised intimacy with their wives, the interviewees varied in valuing sharing, trust, feeling supported, unity, dependence or companionship (as respectively defined in Table 1). This variation among ten participants proves the need to cast a wide verbal net when hunting for incidence of intimacy in marriages. Future

studies on marital intimacy should recognize and appreciate this variety, especially taking more care than I have to account for unity in study design.¹⁹⁰

Although intimacy contributes to longer marriages, the reverse does not necessarily hold. That is, the data espoused no connection between levels of intimacy and length of time married, discouraging the assumption that the longer one is married, the more intimate the marriage will automatically become. It is reasonable to expect marriages to deepen over time, but this study suggests that marriages develop depth at different rates, and that, in marriages beyond five years, the degree of intimacy depends more upon factors other than length of time married. What those factors may be, this research explored.

Gender-Fostered Intimacy

The scoring data, displayed in chapter four's Figure 2, demonstrated a correlation between gender distinction and intimacy in this data set. The quantitative analysis can be represented qualitatively by simply categorizing and comparing the scores. Appendix III explains how this was done to produce Table 6, which lays the rankings for each interview side by side to compare:

¹⁹⁰ As explained in CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS ON INTIMACY, GENDER, AND THEIR RELATION, Section: "Appreciating Many Facets of Intimacy."

Table 6 –General Comparison of Overall Intimacy Rankings with Overall Gender Distinction Rankings in Ten Interviews

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Intimacy</u>
High	Low
Low	Low
Low	Low
Medium	Medium
High	Medium
Medium	Medium
Medium	High
Medium	High
High	High
High	High

The composite score-derived rankings comparison shows, in a straightforward way, the positive association of the degree of gender distinction with the degree of intimacy in these couples. As noted in chapter four, the one great disparity, in the first listed case (High gender distinction-Low intimacy experience), comes from the husband who was youngest in age and in one of the youngest marriages.

I interpret the correlation, in light of the small sample size and highly selective group, to signify a real phenomenon. In quantitative terms, of course, this is an extremely small sampling of marriages. But in one little square on the graph of all marriages, one is less likely to see a correlation. So its visibility, even within this targeted group, may hint at an effect at work. If, dipping into one mountain stream looking for gold, one finds gold in the pan, one's expectation would be raised that gold pervades the hills. Likewise, we have a sparkle here that intimacy and gender distinction do indeed go together. Of course, it could also be the case that there is something unique about this particular stream of data. We must investigate next if that is the case with these men. But the correlation at least invites further quantitative work on the gender-intimacy relationship.

Besides the question of generalizing a link to the broader landscape of marriages, there is the question of causality. Our correlation by itself does not establish cause, even for these relationships. For example, one could postulate that, in our sample, greater intimacy causes more gender distinction (instead of vice versa), or that some other factor, such as high income or time in prayer, causes both. Figure 2 and Table 6 only say that, in these marriages, the two go together.

There is a way, however, to explore whether the relationship is indeed causal. A big slice of this study was digesting the gender distinction that goes into the marriages. Examining the practices of the marriage and their effects, according to the interviewees, may explain how gender distinction could indeed be the ingredient fostering their intimacy.

Three Paths of Esteeming Gender

The marriages this study sampled certainly emphasize the play of gender. The husbands collectively offered seven different feminine distinctions, as listed in Table 2, but three of them stood out. The major categories of feminine/masculine distinctions were Deferring and Respecting/Taking Authority, Caring for Home/Providing for Home, Strong Helping/Leading. These three are the primary relating venues through which gender is emotionally recognized in these relationships, and our study examined the husband's experience of the feminine side of the three pairs.

The First Path: On Granting Authority

When queried as to what comprised the wife's gender distinction, the most common answer received pertained to deferring and respecting (Table 2). "Submitting to my leadership" and "not mocking but respecting me" stood out as experiences of note for

these husbands. As discussed in chapter two, evangelicals consider the ontology of equality and the responsibilities of headship and submission to be non-contradictory tenets of family life. Sally K. Gallagher found, for example, that 87.4 percent of evangelicals believe that “marriage should be an equal partnership,” just as 90.4 percent believe that the “husband should be head of the family.”¹⁹¹

The issue of equality and fairness is a serious one and deserves careful consideration in any discussion of relationship quality. Interestingly, the interviewees considered submission a mark, not of inequality, but of might in their wives. Voluntarily showing respect, promoting, and putting forward someone else are certainly practices that take deliberate and sometimes heroic effort, and the majority of these men seemed to recognize their wives’ consistent exercise of those practices as displays of tremendous strength. Even without talking to the wives, which was outside the scope of this study, the husbands’ attitudes belie a parity of respect in the marriage that may answer concerns of inequality. Quite different from the picture of submitting wives as dominated or weak and unable to stand up for themselves, the asymmetry these couples practice fosters a subtle kind of equality that matters more to them than equal authority.

Previous research found, apparently due to “the influence of the gender-egalitarian values of the surrounding culture,”¹⁹² that evangelical espousal of wifely submission was “practically irrelevant”¹⁹³ and mere “symbolic traditionalism.”¹⁹⁴ In other

¹⁹¹ Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity and Gendered Family Life*, 69.

¹⁹² For example, Smith, 189.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 186, 188.

¹⁹⁴ Denton, 1157; after Gallagher and Smith, “Symbolic Traditionalism and Pragmatic Egalitarianism: Contemporary Evangelicals, Families, and Gender,” 211.

words, though Christians say that the husband is in charge, they really do not act that way; the language of headship lingers over a pragmatic egalitarianism. Elaboration from participants in this sample found this not to be so. This result could be explained by our group being distinct among evangelicals. It must be born in mind that this group was sampled to include only those who embrace some form of gender distinction.

But more importantly, previous research recorded an innateness to the evangelical practice of headship, while not always appreciating its significance.¹⁹⁵ The idea of “symbolic traditionalism” came out of interviews in which the subjects could not recall an example of a husband’s veto. But this approach is faulty. Though the couples in this study seek consensus in decision-making, and the husband goes to lengths to hear the wife’s voice, in most the mutual understanding of the wife’s submission governs the interactions leading up to decisions in non-trivial ways. An implicit rhythm of feminine deference and masculine leadership, feminine respect and masculine attendance, characterizes their decision-making, granting the husband distinct power and privilege.¹⁹⁶ In other words, as the wives lean into this gender distinction, these couples operate with a very real but inherent leadership and submission that may not be very visible to outside observers in the form of a final veto. It is analogous to the leading and following that transpire during formal dancing. When it is done well, it is rarely noticed by onlookers.

The unspoken reality also meant that the wife could be practicing gender distinction without the husband being entirely conscious of it. Future research design

¹⁹⁵ Consider Christian Smith’s quotation of an interviewee, “The headship part is kind of innate...” while still concluding said headship was “functionally egalitarian,” without real substance: Smith, 187, 188.

¹⁹⁶ This is, again, contrary to the characterization by Smith of evangelicals in general: *ibid.*, 176, 181.

should accommodate this with questions that probe the spouse's behavior in telling settings, such as, "What does she/he tell the children about who is in charge?"

Although not the focus of the interviews, there were indications of a corresponding self-sacrifice and accountability on the husbands' part in the way they carry out their headship.¹⁹⁷ Future research might explore the wives' experiences and assessments of their husbands' actions in this asymmetry, paying close attention to its possibly hidden nature.

The marriages seemed sensitive to differences among women in personality and gifting. Even so, many times gender matters trump giftedness. It is not as if the wife knows less, has trouble making up her mind, or cannot do some of the things the husband does in leading. But, as Ted explained in his advice to wives on how to foster intimacy, "Even if you are the more dominant personality, don't dominate [your husband]." Such advice may seem counter-productive to developing a wife's gifts if she, say, has the more dominant personality. And not developing the gifts of one partner of a marriage may seem counter-productive to developing intimacy between them. How could intimacy come of confinement? The prominence of submission prompts the question: could there be a benefit that accounts for this non-intuitive practice?

An often overlooked feature of the Bible's commands regarding wifely submission, which form the backdrop to the practices here examined, is how they are addressed to the wives, not the husbands. In contrast to the Koran,¹⁹⁸ for example, the

¹⁹⁷ Here, in agreement with *ibid.*, 180.

¹⁹⁸ Consider the prophet's instruction, "Men have authority over women because God has made the one superior to the other...As for those whom you fear disobedience, admonish them, forsake them in beds apart, and beat them" in "Women," N. J. Dawood, *The Koran*, 50th anniversary ed. ed., Penguin Classics (London; New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 64. Compare also the instruction to the wives of the prophet in "Prohibition," *ibid.*, 398.

Bible never tells husbands to make their wives submit—quite the contrary. Rather wives are told to voluntarily surrender prerogative for the sake of the husband. So the asymmetry the Bible teaches is not subjugation, or even domination, which has so characterized the sad history of men and women in relationship, and which was blatantly predicted in Genesis 3:16. Rather, it is the valued and limited submission appropriate to an equal partner.

If we recognize wifely deferral and honoring as the first and largest category of feminine gender distinction, the one which matters most to these men, then the interview answers also tell us why this is the case. Identity formation, one important facet of intimacy, found prominence in these intergendered relationships. One interview question specifically addressing that facet drew a similar response from every single interviewee. It was the identity facet-derived request to “describe a time when she made you feel like a man.” No matter how prominent or absent was the practice of respect or honoring in the rest of the interview, the answer each man gave contained this idea of respecting. It was expressed variously: “acknowledging [my] decision-making [place];” “when she said, ‘I’m really proud of you (for sacrificing for me)’;” “when she puts her arm in mine;” “when she asks my opinion on things;” “she tells me how wonderful I am, how handsome I am;” “the way she gives me the respect...the honor;” “when she entrusts me with something important to her;” “seeing her smiling at me from the stage;” “how she really affirms me as a dad, you know, she realizes she can’t do for them what I can do for them...she affirms me in that every day...as a dad, and as a man;” “when she has really affirmed my leadership, where...she sees something big, in terms of God’s call on my life;” “compliments me a lot on my looks;” “when she’ll brag about stuff that I do to her

family;” “when ...she indicates that she could see me in...even a larger [vocational] role than what I am doing now, whether its national or...she certainly sees that as something that wouldn’t surprise her at all;” “when she tells her friends how blessed she is to be in our relationship;” “when I will be doing yard work outside and she comes and just sits...just watching...She just likes to be around me when I’m doing stuff.” Always included was the same theme of honoring, showing respect and putting the husband forward. Receiving such a universal answer is a significant indication that headship-honoring actions develop the identity of these men. The force of bonding with someone who is instrumental in developing one’s identity is not to be underestimated.

Similarly, it is striking how many of the responses to the ending “blue sky” question (What would you advise wives to do to foster intimacy in the marriage?) concerned submission or respect. Without prompting, much of the advice went along these lines: “Do not emasculate your man in any way. Build him up...” (spoken by two different men); “Want to hear him talk;” “Allow yourself to be vulnerable enough to allow [your husband] to be the man...to lead” (spoken by three different men, two of them using identical phrasing); “Embrace 1Peter 3” (which reads “Wives, be submissive to your husbands...”); “You need to let them be a man in the relationship;” “Respect them. Let them know they’re respected. Beyond all other things, let them know that you see them very much as a man...” Even the one husband who claimed no priority in decision-making and mentioned nothing about submission in the interview still ended with the exhortation to wives to “pursue in submission.”

The interviewees’ evident appreciation, judging from the phrasing used in Table 2 and the quotations enumerated above, is to be found in how authority asymmetry affords

the husbands an experience of respect. Such respect is a huge identity-forming factor in these grateful men's lives.

If this is a gender distinction, it would mean that this does something for the husbands that the same practice would not, or does not, do for the wives. No doubt an intimate marriage would form the identity of the wife as well, but through different actions on the husband's part. Further research, namely talking to the wives, would be needed to ascertain this, but it begins to make sense that the husbands see feminine gendered activity primarily in terms of voluntary submission or deference and that this action of putting the husband forward shines the facets of intimacy between them. In this Christian landscape, reverence is a supremely valuable gift that wives can give. And when given, it seems, intimacy flourishes.

The Second Path: On Home Creating

Evangelical women are employed at rates similar to that of the general population, and their median household income mirrors that of other Americans.¹⁹⁹ Yet there persists among evangelicals a conviction that the wife should be focused on the home. Indeed, the second most talked about category of wife/husband distinction among our group, according to Table 2, was Family and Home care/Family and Home provision. Specifically, whereas these couples generally conceived of the husband as the primary financial provider for the home, the wife primarily cared for it, including caring for children (Table 3). Why, in light of economic realities, does this ideal endure among Christians? Even Steven, who felt bread-winning was to be equally shared, confided that his wife, Madeline, still felt responsible for their home.

¹⁹⁹ Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity and Gendered Family Life*, 5.

Stephanie Coontz traces the origin of the male-sole breadwinner/female-homemaker model of marriage to the spread of wage labor in the late eighteenth century.²⁰⁰ Apart from the economics, on first glance it is hard to see the benefit to intimacy that this division would deliver, other than the specialization being one way to make the home run more smoothly. Most of the interviewees had children at home, a situation which usually demands specialization from one of the partners. Is the wife's home focus just a residual of bourgeois tradition?

Although it is certainly the case that evolving economic situations change what men and women do, division of home and finance functioning by gender has actually been a consistent practice in the general population throughout history, whether it was the hunter-gatherer wife concentrating on digging and foraging, while the husband focused on hunting large game, or it was the feudal couple both helping with the harvest, but the husband focusing on the outdoor agricultural labor (a "plowman") and the wife on preparing flax, brewing beer and cheese, and washing their clothes in the village stream, whether it was the later urban husband working a trade with his wife as a partner keeping the books or acting as his agent,²⁰¹ or whether it was the twentieth century (aberrant) conditions that allowed a single income to sustain a rich lifestyle for an entire family. This prevalence suggests that there is perhaps something more to gendered chore division than economic realities or the subjugation of women.

One clue to the answer may be in how general population studies on perception of fairness in the division of household labor show a complexity underlying the actual

²⁰⁰ Coontz, *Marriage, a History: From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage*, 105, 146, 154-155.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 38, 66, 110, 114-115.

chores done. Perceptions of fairness often lack correspondence to actual equitable dividing of work.²⁰² Something is transpiring between husband and wife that reaches beyond simply division of labor.

Another clue to may be in how, as chapter four reported, among Christians sometimes division of responsibility is made in spite of giftedness, in order to speak something to each other about what is perceived as a deeper reality. For example, in Edwin's experience, "we felt like we needed to do that [his bread-winning, her doing house work] in those early days, as part of us growing into who we were as men and women. But over time it's come to...something not so extreme." In other words, the import of the distinction in chores lay in something other than the chores themselves. The husbands and wives in this study are all able to do certain chores well, and they often do do them for one another. Most interviewees qualified their answers about their wives' housework and care for the children, saying they do some of the work of the home also. In some cases, the wife also works outside the home. Though some confessed amazement at what their wives could do with the children that they felt they could not, in other instances the husbands are even better at the home chores than the wives. But the husband, in recalling the wife doing them, was bringing up something that strikes him as meaningful. His doing them is fine. Her doing them seems to advance the relationship.

I theorize that what counts is the wife's work to create a home for her particular husband in some way. Her effort to make a place of rest may be the roadway underneath the snow of cultural practices. Fred's wife, Denise, "taking a step back from her business

²⁰² Alfred DeMaris and Monica A. Longmore, "Ideology, Power, and Equity Testing Competing Explanations for the Perception of Fairness in Household Labor," *Social Forces* 74, no. 3 (1996): 1043, 1064-1067.

career for the family” deeply moved Fred in his experience of the marriage. That very act of giving up immediate career advancement, of not doing what she could do, in order to make a home for him, carried significance in the makings of intimacy.

Our documentary evidence from Appendix IV may provide assistance.²⁰³ The second of the three gender asymmetries for close relationships, of which the Bible speaks, is how the man and the woman were made for each other. It pictures, and so seems to find great significance in, the wife providing a place of rest for the husband. Denise’s service to Fred and his children made a place for him to “at last find his rib,” to use the language of Genesis 2. Supporting this interpretation of Genesis are other scriptures that find significance in the wife’s focus on the home, such as Titus 2:4-5 (New Testament) and Proverbs 31:10-31 (Old Testament), both passages which seem to have influence among the interviewees. In fact, Fred mentioned that Denise had quoted Proverbs 31 to him in reference to her actions. Or, as Edwin stated bluntly of Sandra, “She’s very Proverbs 31.”

This theory might explain why, for the most part, many initial responses did not recognize the chore division that is actually there. That could be due to cultural pressure to appear fair. But, in addition, what these husbands value isn’t the chores themselves but the experience of their wives making a place of rest for them. And this specialty could be expressed in many different ways, depending on the culture and the individual people involved. As Theo offered, “[Melanie sees it as] that she has a really powerful role to play in what kind of environment she creates for me to live in.”

²⁰³ APPENDIX IV: THE BIBLICAL PORTRAYAL OF GENDER, Section: “Five Distinctive Assertions by the Bible about Gender,” Subsection: “The Asymmetry of the Genders: Different Specialties.”

Legitimate concerns to establish and guard the equality of women and men in the home should not be allowed to obscure this large feature of the conservative Christians' gendered landscape. This reasoning of home chore division as a path to intimacy may explain the research (enumerated in chapter two) that found a connection between gendered household chore distinction and marital happiness in couples. It at least suggests that the venue, however strange, should not be dismissed as merely retrograde. Rather, it should be taken seriously in explaining the intimacy arising in these successful couples. Future study might distinguish between housework and childcare,²⁰⁴ as well as following how the contribution of this particular category of gender distinction changes through different seasons of life. One question that could be asked is, given current economic realities, do couples who opt for a lower standard of living so wives can focus on homemaking and child-rearing enjoy greater intimacy? Finally, a more extensive interview process involving wives would be able to compare what she finds significant in the couple's home care asymmetry.

The Third Path: On Strong Helping

While I found the first two main venues of gender distinction (Authority Granting and Home Creating) in some form in the literature, the third, delineated by Table 2 as Strong Helping, I did not. Yet answers in this Strong Helping category occurred third most frequently as these interviewees recounted how their wives act womanly. Specifically, they mentioned their wives contributing thought to them, challenging and questioning them, praying for and encouraging them, taking things off their shoulders, in summary generally: rising to assist their husbands in their discovered callings. Though

²⁰⁴ Sally K. Gallagher finds this distinction important, Gallagher, *Evangelical Identity and Gendered Family Life*, 126.

the husbands might do some of these same things for their wives, the husbands affirmed strong helping as a true distinction, not holding the same significance in how they loved their wives.

Appendix II explored the graphing of different components of gender distinction versus degree of intimacy in the couples. The scatter plot of this component, included as Figure 5, shows the strongest correlation with increasing intimacy. We may theorize, combining the graphs of Appendix II with the interview emphases, that gender distinction develops intimacy in stages, with some venues more important to one phase of the relationship than to others. Perhaps the lower association in the graphs of Authority and Home Chore means that, in these couples of already high intimacy, the practices were important earlier in establishing relations in the marriage. What really makes the difference, at a later stage, is the Strong Helper venue.

Of the three main venues through which gender distinction is expressed, this one especially invites further consideration, especially in light of the sexual difference research result that women have a greater tendency to seek and use social support,²⁰⁵ that is, relational “help.” This study has only scratched the surface of exploring how this feature plays in the gendered landscape of Christian marriages, and it calls for more attention to better picture how they work.

On the Link to Biblical Counsel

Appendix IV supplies a careful study of the main themes of gender in the Bible. Therein, we see developed an equality between women and men in being, as well as a tri-fold asymmetry between them in relationship, derived from “the after,” “the from,” and

²⁰⁵ Rhoads, 140.

“the for” of woman’s creation. It is hard to avoid seeing a correspondence in the three major venues of gender distinction discovered in these couples. If Bible lesson and research data are indeed talking about the same thing, then they illuminate each other. In the Bible, the wife is called to promote her husband by granting him authority, while the husband, created first, is called to take it for her. This fits well with the wives in these couples respecting and putting forward their husbands.

Secondly, when he loses a rib, their union returns it to him. She is made from him, and her return, his glory, gives him the rest from which it was taken. If this is what is going on when these wives create homes for their husbands, it suggests that there is more than tradition to the persistence of home chore asymmetry.

Thirdly, she is divinely gifted to empower him to the task of their calling together, and he is called to find and lead in it. On account of the lack of characterization in the literature on this point, we have already borrowed the label of “Strong Helper” from the Bible to describe this third venue. It does seem that the husbands’ descriptions of what their wives are doing for them fits the description of why God made Eve for Adam in the first place.

If we are reading correctly, these highlights recommend that what these couples are doing, to a greater or lesser degree, has precedence in the Holy writ and intimates ancient wisdom here. The three venues, expounded in the interview answers, propose plausible cause in the link between gender distinctive practices and these couples’ intimacy. It is a link their Bible explicitly makes.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁶ Combining the teachings of Jesus and the apostle, Paul, give grounds for seeing gender distinction causing intimacy. APPENDIX IV: THE BIBLICAL PORTRAYAL OF GENDER, Section: “Five Distinctive Assertions by the Bible about Gender,” Sub-section: “The Purpose of the Genders: A Gift to Foster Intimacy.”

Dynamics of Gender-Wrought Intimacy

This study has determined a link, and found plausible causes, between gender distinction and intimacy for the small number of evangelical Christian marriages sampled, made up of husbands who have a history with SSA and wives who are committed to gender distinction. As the length of the previous sentence testifies, this is an extremely selective sample set: we cannot quickly extrapolate these findings to a more general population. Just because something may be working well for them, it does not follow that it is good for all marriages. One could hypothesize, for example, that mixed-orientation couples need more gendered behavior to flourish, or that these couples' successes are predicated on certain beliefs they hold that could be replaced by better ones.

Nonetheless, a case can be made for broader application of the results. Because of their unique situation, we have something to learn from these men. Most of the subjects have had both monogendered and intergendered relationships. Because they can compare these relationships, they are exceptionally competent to instruct us on the differences between them. Of all people to speak of the effect of gender in relationships, these men would seem to be the most qualified.

Secondly, the literature review did uncover studies yielding the counterintuitive finding that gender distinction fostered healthier marriages in broader populations.²⁰⁷ This study may be confirming, in a narrow group, a broader dynamic witnessed by previous work.

²⁰⁷ CHAPTER TWO: A LITERATURE REVIEW..., Section: "What does Gender Distinction do to Intimacy in Marriage?"

A third point to bear in mind is the high intimacy demonstrated by the endurance of these marriages. SSA presents a formidable obstacle to intergendered marriage, at least initially, because sexual motivation for union is low or absent. Yet, as explained above, emotional intimacy overcame this obstacle and precipitated an enduring and unifying physical intimacy, so that the emotional intimacy achieved, the strong predictor of any marriage, is quite high. If we can see why attention to gender improves dynamics found generally in marriages, we have stronger reason to say that gender distinction can lead to intimacy for other marriages as well.

That stronger reason may perhaps be found in the rich explanations the interviewees gave about how they see gender distinction, both essence and practice, fostering different facets of intimacy. As described in chapter four,²⁰⁸ the husbands interviewed for this study all preferred intergendered relationships to their monogendered ones. This is not surprising, as they have all chosen long-term intergendered marriages. But the third part of the interview probed for the reasons why these men chose to live in unions that, at least at first, would deny what felt most desirable to them physically. The six categories²⁰⁹ of answer organized into Table 4, and expanded in Table 5, begin to give a convincing answer.

The Six Why's

The interview questions from which these dynamics emerged were framed to allow the husbands to speak of gender distinction as they wished, as a matter of practice or essence. Their answers showed that what the wives do makes a big impact, but so also

²⁰⁸ CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS ON INTIMACY, GENDER, AND THEIR RELATION, Section: "How Does Gender Relate to His Experience of Intimacy," Subsection: "The Light of Gender."

²⁰⁹ As explained in Chapter Four, there are six given the implied sacred reasons that form their religious identity.

do their supposedly feminine qualities. It is not just what they do, but who they are, doing what they do, that makes a difference in these men's experiences. This intertwining recommends, at least, that attempting to understand femininity in solely essentialist terms (how women are different) or solely behavioral terms (what women should do) is inadequate to model the features of intergendered marriage.

Religious reasons were not explored in depth in these interviews, but they are nonetheless integral to the dynamic of gender distinction for the interviewees. Knowledge of Christ and belief in blessing for intergendered relationships figured large. However, the interviewer concentrated on, if God in their view designed intergendered unions, why that was so and how the men experienced divine blessing of intimacy through them. From within this framework of faith, six dynamics of gender-wrought intimacy emerged, giving insight into how and why the interviewees so value their intergendered marriages. Reversing Table 5 and looking at how the dynamics foster the different facets, we can begin to see how it all actually works.

The most frequently identified way that gender distinction promoted intimacy was in there simply being a large difference between husband and wife, that is, in the Difference Itself (#1 in Table 4). The interviewees collectively cited Differentness Itself as fostering every aspect of intimacy discussed. They talked about how differentness fosters unity from each bringing something different to the relationship; how it increases a desire for the husband to share in order to find out how womanhood responds to the thing shared; how it builds trust from having to rely on each other's different responsibilities; how it creates greater dependence from not doing or being able to do what she does; how her gendered acts of service, different from his, support him; how it

develops companionship from her womanhood supplying what is missing; and how his identity is secured by how he complements her. These various explanations recommend differentness (both essence and practice) as fertile ground in which all the different shoots of intimacy can grow.²¹⁰ This logic of asymmetry would explain why, even though both husband and wife might do some of the same things for each other, the relationship is profoundly advanced when a particular one specializes in a task. Thus these couples, at times, allow gender concerns to trump gifting.

The second category of explanation for intergendered intimacy, the second most frequently occurring, centered on the absence of competition in life with a woman. All of the reasons in this area applied to either essence or practice. The interviewees spoke of the unity fostered from a “face to face posture,” which they felt was unique to an intergendered relationship. They thought that a vulnerability, an ability to confess a man’s inner working, arose from this lack of competition and encouraged sharing. They explained how non-competitiveness fostered trust by removing walls, suspicions, and limits to what each disclosed. They also shared how it shaped identity by allowing the husband his own uniqueness.

The third collection of reasons concerned the personal growth these men associated with their intergendered unions. Most of the facets were covered as they spoke of intimacy fostered by her nature, need, service, and desire, calling forth growth in him to be proactive for her. He grew in pleasing, covering, protecting, and being attentive to

²¹⁰ The difference dynamic expressed recalls the logic uncovered by Kornrich et.al. regarding sexual passion, cited in chapter two of this paper. They quote Pepper Schwartz to the effect that “introducing more distance or difference, rather than connection and similarity, helps to resurrect passion in long-term, stable relationships,” Kornrich, Brines, and Leupp, 30.

her. Through her nature and nurture he also grew in trust in God, in becoming secure as a man.

Difference In Emotion emerged as the fourth category of answer (#4 in Table 4) to how intimacy flourished in intergendered unions. While there was not general agreement on how women differed from men, there was a locus of belief that emotional distinctions characterized the genders. In essentialist terms, interviewees spoke of how the exceptional emotional qualities of women foster sharing at a deeper level. They discussed how women provoke trust by sensitivities that invite risking vulnerabilities. They also talked about how their wives build trust through easing interdependence, and how companionship grows by those qualities inviting silliness in the men. Albeit expressed through the lens of various personality types, these answers indicate that the emotional qualities of women play a noteworthy role in the intimacy of these relationships. As Fred somewhat creatively described it, “Men are like strings, women like balloons. Women rise in lofty splendor, but need the string to be tied down. But men, without them, are just strings dropped in the mud.”

Difference In Virtue constituted an interesting fifth locus of rationale (Table 4, #5) for how gender matters. The husbands on several instances described the ways they admire and are advanced by virtues they find uniquely in women and how their wives’ practice of those things makes for different aspects of intimacy. There were claims of unity fostered by a gentle welcome, allowing the husbands to let their guards down; how sharing is increased by the way that her womanhood enlightens his self-understanding; how a feeling of support comes from the strength of her femininity; and how identity is shaped by the enhancement of her feminine merits.

The final way unity comes about is in the ability to physically create another person together. The power of this experience was highlighted by a personal account of the powerful bond formed between Steven and Madeline in having a baby in concert.

All the various dynamics are summarized in Table 7, labeled as to whether the dynamic is one of primarily essence, primarily practice, or both. The scatter of these letters shows the intertwining significance of practice and essence in the meaning of gender for the interviewees.

Table 7 –The Dynamics of Gender Distinction Fostering Intimacy

Listed by frequency of response

E: primarily a matter of Essence; P: primarily a matter of Practice; B: Both Practice and Essence

<i>Primarily Essence:</i>	<i>Both:</i>	#1 Differentness Itself (essence or practice) fosters: (15 times)	
	B	Unity	from complementation
E		Sharing	from motivation to find out how womanhood responds
	P	Trust	from having to rely on others' different responsibilities
E		Dependence	from the "other" creating greater place of being dependent
	P	Dependence	from her taking on unique responsibilities, e.g. in home
	P	Being Supported	from her gendered acts of service specifically to support me
E		Companionship	from her womanhood supplying what is missing
E		Identity	from a security in how I complement her
		#2 Absence of Competition fosters: (9 times)	
		B	Unity from allowing face-to-face posture
		B	Sharing from vulnerability to confess, to speak of my workings
		B	Trust from removing suspicion, sharing limits, brings walls down
		B	Identity from giving me a secure uniqueness
		#3 Resulting Growth fosters: (8 times)	
E		Unity	from her nature calling me toward pleasing, doing more
E		Unity	from her need calling me toward covering, protecting
	B	Sharing	from her service helping me regarding SSA
	P	Trust	from her trust in me encouraging my trust in God (for her)
E		Being supported	from her womanhood informing that haven't failed as man
	B	Identity	from her desire helping me become a man
E		Identity	from her need calling me forth to watch over
		#4 Difference In Emotion fosters: (5 times)	
E		Sharing	from women feeling at different level, making deeper connect
E		Trust	from sensitivities giving room to me to risk
E		Dependence	from making interdependence
E		Companionship	from encouraging open silliness in me
		#5 Difference In Virtue fosters: (5 times)	
	B	Unity	from gentle welcome
E		Sharing	from her womanhood increasing my understanding of me
E		Being supported	from strong femininity
	B	Identity	from her femininity enhancing my masculinity
		#6 Ability to Bear Children fosters: (1 time)	
E		Unity	from the bond of making new life together

The Challenge of Gender: Called Out By Other

There was an answer in the Resulting Growth category, regarding how identity is forged through gender distinction, which deserves comment. One of the reasons these husbands sought an intergendered union was their perception of a lack of personal growth in their monogendered ones:

Theo: "It left me self-focused."

Edwin: "To be perfectly honest with you, when I was in a relationship with a man, I wanted a man to take care of me."

Silva: "Alexa called [for me] to watch over. My relationships with men were ones to watch over me... [I came to feel:] you can't be you."

Ted: "They kept me emotionally immature."

Silva: "Males call some vulnerability out of me, some weakness out of me,...call for me to remain like that....[Those relationships were] a giving up of authority, ...diminishing both [of us]...Hers was just the opposite: 'No, come forth. Be strong. Be solid. Be real. Be man.'"

Conversely, there was recognition, prominent among the higher intimacy interviewees, of the ways that the wives' femininity helps their husbands to grow. A big component of this growth from intergendered difference, and one often described by the men, happens from what can be termed, "being called out by other." This is a paraphrase of terms Silva used during his interview: "The mystery of male and female union...is about 'other' ...it called out of me fruit...I'm more awakened to being me. I'm a different man."

Other interviewees also spoke about how being with a woman, encountering her differentness, forced a confrontation with "the other:"

Edwin: "The vulnerability that she brings to the relationship...scared me for so long that I avoided that, and was drawn to my own people, just like me, literally just like me: same gender."

Fred: "This [wedding] ring is not a ring. This is a handcuff. It's like we're tied together and we have to come up with a plan because we can't be going in two different directions. Like we have to come up with some sort of agreement because we are handcuffed together."

Ted: “It’s not like Audrey is particularly more mature than the [men] that I was with...It’s just the two of us together...having to...It’s just deeper. It is.”

Nick: “[Intimacy comes from] every bit me wanting to meet her needs as her wanting to meet mine.”

But the “other” also surprised the men with comfort:

Theo: “her...choosing to receive from me and to need from me...yes, that is definitely calling me to be far more than I am.”

Silva: “because she rested into me, it gave me a desire...that’s what’s building me.”

This comfort and confrontation constituted a call to grow as a man. The differentness of woman and her practices these men claimed to be vital in the development of their identity and, consequently, in the deepening of their marital relationships. The challenge of the “other” also arose in response to questioning about why, if intergendered relationships were preferable, these men remained, for a time, in monogendered ones. Besides the answers of “I didn’t know what I didn’t know,” or “I didn’t think it was possible,” there were other, more comparative, answers such as “to not be challenged;” “cowardice;” “I didn’t have to learn anything new;” and “It is easier to be dependent on a guy.” On the other hand, Edwin shared, “It was a huge risk for my wife and I to step into who we really were as men and women.”

Theo explained the dynamic at length:

I need to dig down...more to be able to, as a man, to meet her needs as a woman, in a way that is very different than meeting the needs of a guy. [This is why my monogendered relationships] would always be stunted. It’s sort of the easy way out. It’s easier...One man knows typically what another man desires or needs in many different ways. And women tend to know the same for other women. It’s that harder thing of...more of that mystery coming together and the unknown in that that I think prompts the greatest degree of satisfaction in these areas...Yeah. I couldn’t say that enough...having to dig down deeper...It’s impossible for two men to be challenged to the depth that opposite sex relationships are going to challenge us...I can actually become more than I ever thought I would be....The Holy Spirit is calling me into an arena that...um, that’s calling me to be more than

I've ever been before, in relationship to her, to meet her needs, to be for her what she needs...

The logic of this dynamic is thus: An intergendered relationship requires engagement with the "otherness" of woman, the demands and rewards of which engagement make one a different, more mature person, and so, paradoxically, more oneself. This dynamic forms a powerful bond to the women who brought it out of them. This may be why none of the interviewees would trade what they have now for what they had, in spite of being subject, at times, to temptations of SSA and a visual pull to check out other men. Of all the reasons cited for intergendered unions, being "Called Out By Other" may be the most profound.

Conclusion

These happy husbands have encountered an intense and transformative gender-fostered intimacy as they compare their monogendered and intergendered unions. As has been suggested at various points above, further research into the wife's perspective in good marriages, perhaps also with a history of SSA, would be invaluable for filling out and perhaps correcting the picture here painted. Until then, only half of the story has been told.

In addition, limited diversity of sample, and the qualitative approach of drawing from a low sample size of individual stories, recommends caution in broader application of the gender distinction-intimacy relationship found herein. Their story is not everyone's.

On the other hand, the universal elements of their stories should challenge us to think carefully about marriages and what goes into deepening them. These couples are not from another planet. As chapter two showed, intimacy is the key to routine marriages

as well as to mixed-orientation marriages. The intimacy facets of Table 7, derived as they were from the literature, can be recognized as the stuff of all marriages. In addition, all husbands need identity formation and growth as men. The temptations described by these husbands did not sound very different from those of heterosexual men who have pledged monogamy to a wife. In sum, the dynamics disclosed in this study are recognizable beyond the particularities of this sample set: the history of SSA, the five year or more commitments, the presence of earlier relationships or even the Christian convictions of the participants. Such points of relevance argue for possible generalization of the gender-intimacy association uncovered in their story.

The logic of their testimonies has much to recommend it. As Appendix IV shows, it is not only the participants' logic, but also the Bible's, which assigns to gender distinction great power to change people, makes it the focal point of marriage teaching, and represents its purpose and goal as intimacy. In our quest to know what matters in making marriages that last, this pathway warrants serious consideration. As Silva reflected, "A woman who knows who she is has tremendous innate power."

In other words, she matters.

APPENDIX I: Interview Protocol

Pre-Interview

- Sign two copies of consent form.
- My motives and purpose: I'm here to learn.
- Some questions touch on controversial issues for our culture: I need what you think and do, rather than what others think that you should do. I need to hear your story.
- I may interrupt you at times to direct you, because a marriage is a big thing. There is a whole lot you could talk about. But, in our limited time, I need to focus us just on certain parts.
- We don't think about these things every day, so it is fine if you have to think a while before answering.
- Any questions?

Wife's name:

Begin time:

Interview Protocol: (probing questions indented)

Intimacy: (your experience)

1. Tell me of a time when you felt a real connection to your wife (unity)?
Describe the bond. What were the emotions?
2. Can you tell me of some things that you share w/your wife that you don't with other people?
3. In terms of trust, on a scale of 1 to 10 of all marriage relationships, where would you place your relationship?
How do you trust each other? How is that trust experienced/expressed?
4. If she were suddenly gone, what would that be like for you (dependence)?
5. In what ways do you feel support from your wife?
6. Describe a time (or times) when you look forward to being with her (companionship).
What do you think of when you anticipate the time?
What kind of things are you thinking about when looking forward to it?

Gender distinction:

7. In what ways have you seen your wife acting as a woman, according to the Bible, toward you?
Tell me of a time when you felt that she was particularly womanly toward you.

What does she think (you should be doing as a man?) →she should be doing?

8. Noting whether they first mentioned the following or not, ask:

Do you find that she does certain tasks in the home because she's a woman?

If so, which ones?

Are there other things she does for gender reasons?

How does decision-making on important matters work with the two of you?

Can you recall a time of a difficult decision when you took the final say?

How did that work?

(If they use the term), what does being the "spiritual head" entail?

What does your "spiritual headship" mean for her behavior?

Gender related to intimacy:

9. Describe a time when she made you feel like a man (identity)?

10. How do you think her being a woman has contributed to the depth of your relationship?

How would that have been different if you had been with a man instead?

(If emphasis on monogendered relationships being wrong or not God's design:)

Why, since you could do the same w/a man, do you think God has designed it that way? What do you think makes this way good for us?

11. Which of the things we spoke of earlier, in answer to the first questions I asked does her womanhood most effect, if at all? Hand out next page to go over:

How does her womanhood affect this thing?

How does her womanhood affect the other things?

How would that have been different if you had been with a man instead?

(If negative contrast:) Is there something that allows the depth of your marriage that your same-gendered relationship didn't?

Blue sky:

12. If you could advise wives on how to foster emotional intimacy with their husbands, what would you tell them to do?

[Wait in silence at the end to see if they want to add anything]

Post Interview

- Thank for sharing candidly to someone you don't really know.
- Allow time for counseling after sharing.
- Any friends who might be good participants?

Part III: Handout page (for question #11)

How does her womanhood effect...

...your unity w/her?

...your sharing w/her?

...the trust between you?

...your dependence on her?

...your experience of being supported?

...your companionship together?

...your sense of identity?

APPENDIX II: Exploring Impacts of Gendered Practice Venues on Intimacy

As the gender distinction score was composed of three contributing scores, an Authority score, a Home Chore score, and a Strong Helper score, quantitative researchers using this method could construct scatter plots to test predictive power, within a sample set, of the individual components of gender distinctive practices. The scatter plots of this study's sample are included to suggest direction to possible future quantitative exploration of these relationships.

Figures 3, 4 and 5 plot the composite intimacy scores vs. the three gender distinction scores for all the couples, shedding light on the relative importance of the different pieces of gender distinctive practices:

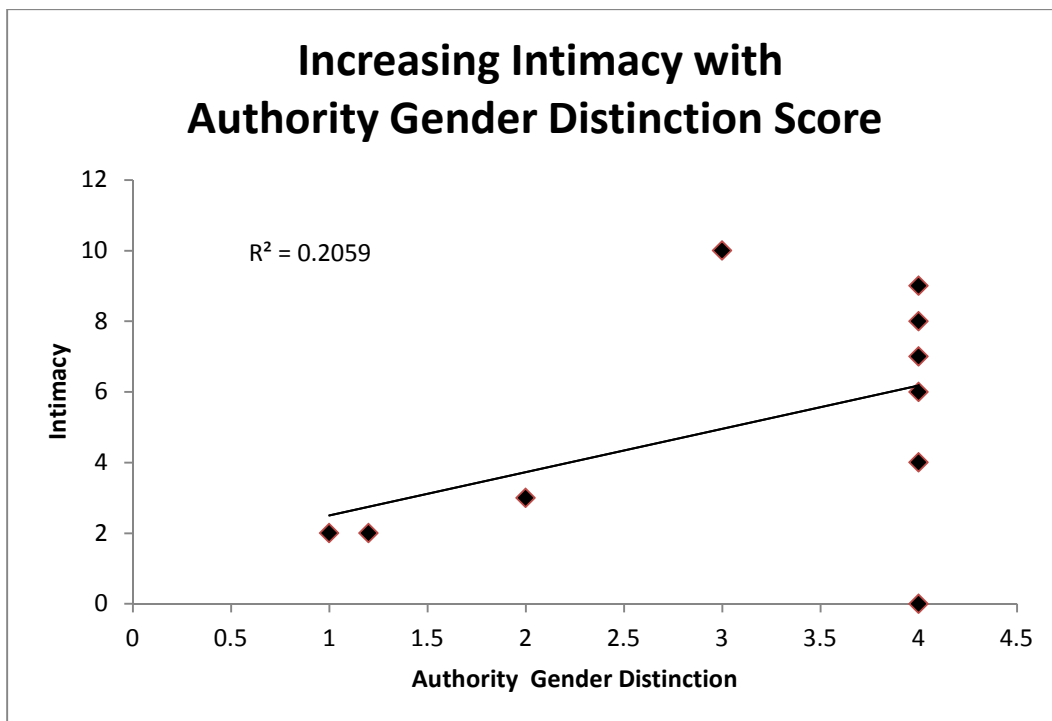


Figure 3: Increasing Intimacy with Authority Gender Distinction Score

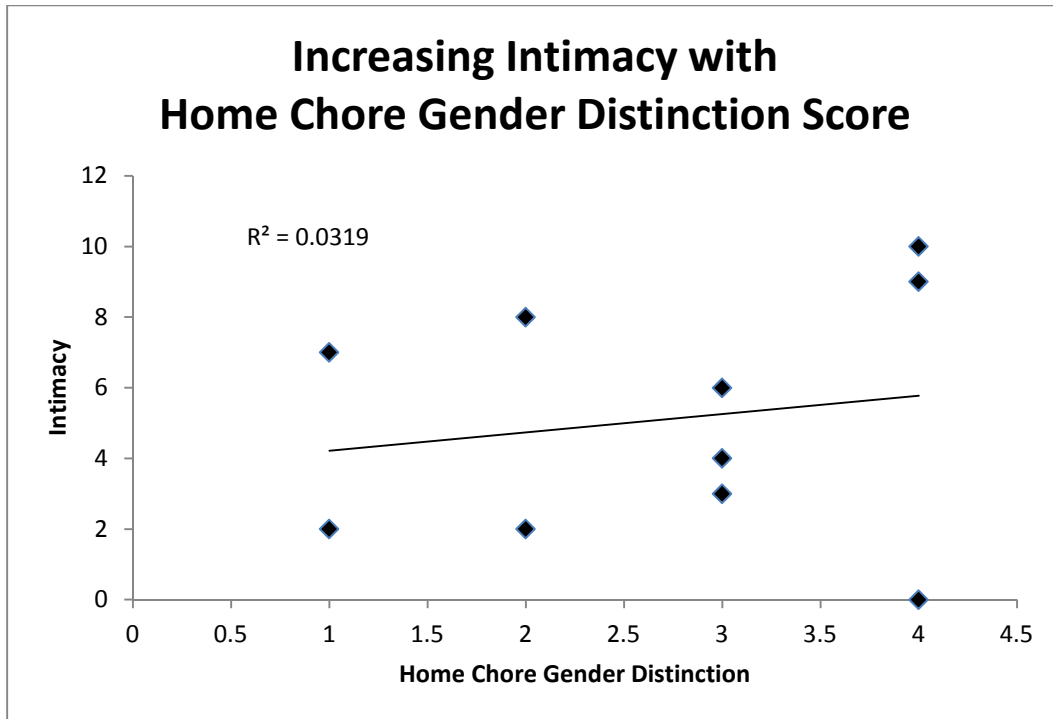


Figure 4: Increasing Intimacy with Home Chore Gender Distinction Score

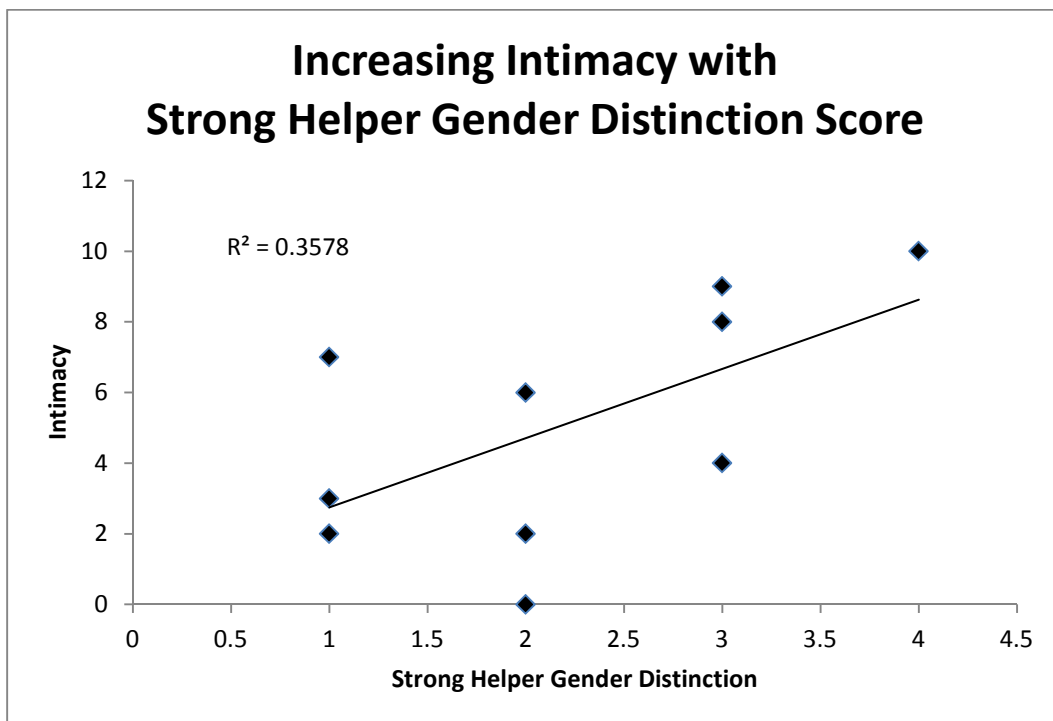


Figure 5: Increasing Intimacy with Strong Helper Gender Distinction Score

Gazing at the finer grains of the gender-intimacy relationship introduces nuance to the picture. Figure 3 shows little correlation between authority asymmetry and intimacy ($r = 0.2$). How is this to be understood? The interview answers make it unlikely to mean that authority distinction is not important to these couples' intimacy. In fact, based on the frequency of answers in Table 2, it seems to be very important. Likewise, the points in Figure 3 tend to fall high on the Authority Distinction scale, indicating a strong presence of this distinction in the relationships. Thus, the lesser correlation could indicate that the interviews did not arrive at the place where major differences in degree of authority exist. If these are high intimacy couples, the gender-intimacy correlation established in Figure 2 could mean that authority distinction plays a more foundational role, or earlier phase, of building that intimacy. A similar interpretation could be proffered for the home chore distinction, the second most frequently cited gender distinctive practice in Table 2 and also shown, by Figure 4's scatter plot ($r = 0.2$), to fail as a predictor of greater or lesser intimacy among the couples. These practices may simply already be an important part of these couples' lives. As only a relationship between the variables in this sample are under consideration, the results do not mean that the variables of authority distinction and home chore division in a broader sample would not prove to be stronger predictors of intimacy. A broader sampling, including marriages at all levels of intimacy, could very well show these distinctions to indeed be predictors of greater intimacy.

Isolating the new category of distinction, the strong helper set of practices, yields an even stronger correlation (Figure 5, $r = 0.6$) than the composite gender score (Figure 2, $r = 0.5$). In other words, in this sample of couples selected for above-average gender

distinction and high intimacy, the strong helper distinction is a predictor of greater intimacy.

APPENDIX III: The Qualitative Ranking of Intimacy and Gender from Quantitative Scores

The scoring data, displayed in chapter four's Figure 2, demonstrated a correlation between gender distinction and intimacy in this data set. The quantitative analysis can be represented qualitatively by simply categorizing and comparing the scores. This appendix explains how that was done to arrive at Table 6 in chapter five.

Table 8 divides the composite intimacy scale into groups of four integers each and labels them as High, Medium, and Low. Placing the scores of the interviewees in these blocks allows them to be assigned an intimacy ranking. The actual values included three Low's, three Medium's, and four High's.

Similarly, starting with the highest possible composite gender distinction score and blocking out four integers at a time, a qualitative gender distinction rating was assigned to each interviewee, yielding two Low's, two Medium's, and six High's, as displayed in Table 9.

Table 8 –Composite Intimacy Scores and Rankings

<u>Range</u>	<u>Ranking</u>	<u>Actual Scores</u>
16	High	16
15		15
14		14
13		13
12	Medium	12
11		
10		10
09		9
08	Low	8, 8
07		
06		6
05		
04	(no scores)	
03		
02		
01		
00		

Table 9 –Composite Gender Distinction Scores and Rankings

<u>Range</u>	<u>Ranking</u>	<u>Actual Scores</u>
12	High	
11		11
10		10, 10, 10
09		9, 9
08	Medium	
07		
06		6
05		5
04	Low	
03		
02		
01		1, 1
00	(no scores)	

Table 6 in the text simply lays these rankings for each interview side by side to compare. That composite score-derived rankings comparison shows, in a straightforward way, the positive association of the degree of gender distinction with the degree of intimacy in these couples.

APPENDIX IV: The Biblical Portrayal of Gender

Outline

I. Systematic Theological Approach

II. Five distinctive assertions by the Bible about Gender:

1. The Gift of the Genders: Constituent of the Image of God
2. The Equality of the Genders: The Same in Spirit
3. The Relevance of the Genders: Gender Matters in Relationship
4. The Asymmetry of the Genders: Different Specialties for the Other
5. The Purpose of the Genders: A Gift to Foster Intimacy

Systematic Theological Approach

The following account is a broad-brush, systematic theological approach to the teaching on gender found in the Bible (Old and New Testaments). The evangelical Christian considers the Bible to be both unified and authoritative in its teaching. So, in the spirit of qualitative research, we seek what is found when the Bible is read in this manner. The sympathetic ear best hears what underlies behaviors arising from beliefs.

This approach needs be general. I do not attempt to say everything that can be said about the Bible and gender. But the most prevalent themes can be identified to discern the Bible's main points on the subject and so what shapes Christians who read the Bible. Specifically, I offer five general assertions that convey the Bible's distinctive teaching on gender.

A systematic approach runs the risk of not doing justice to the voices of the individual biblical authors, so I proceed in a biblical theological fashion, making every effort to understand the statements of the authors in their grammatical, historical, and

literary context. I will also follow the general evangelical practice of accepting the authorship claimed by the individual New Testament texts themselves.

In fact, one finds that a systematic approach does little harm to the individual biblical authors, chiefly because they display a remarkable unity on this matter. Their consistency forms a coherent theology of gender, all the more surprising as the writings involved span some two millennia and various cultural contexts. This unity is due, in part no doubt, to the strong Judaic-Christian value of rooting current expressions in the past Holy Writ. Later witnesses held earlier writings to be authoritative, so these previous statements shaped their own thoughts. But the consistency also comes of them having the same things to say. 1Peter 3:4-6, for example, calls for imitation of the matriarch, Sarah, in her gendered practice, declaring that her principles still benefit the people of God after two thousand years. 1Corinthians 14:34 recalls the Mosaic Law in affirming the practice of gender distinction. These doctrines stood the test of time because the authors continued to consider them practically valuable, as well as God's consistent word.

The texts themselves, then, justify proceeding upon the principle that the Bible speaks with unified voices on gender. And, on this issue, that speaking begins in the very first chapter of Genesis.

Five Distinctive Assertions by the Bible about Gender

1. The Gift of the Genders: Constituent of the Image of God

The Bible cannot get through its first chapter without proclaiming a profound distinction of masculine and feminine:

“Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion...’ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them” (Genesis 1:26-27).

As expressed through that somewhat awkward last sentence, the Genesis author sees gender as a fundamental element of bearing the image of God. But what is gender? We should take the translation, “male and female,” to refer to a reality larger than simply physical sex differences. In chapter two’s more focused story on humanity’s origins,²¹¹ the creation of Eve is distinct from that of Adam. Her genesis is performed after that of the animals, with their own sexual differences (Genesis 2:7, 2:18-22, 6:19). The second account thus emphasizes what was implied in chapter one, that sexual differentiation existed in the world before the conferring of the Divine Image’s “male and female.” Human gender, reflecting God’s image, is something above and beyond the “male and female” found in the plant and animal kingdoms.

But these lower-order sex differences are also His²¹² work. God made humanity from the dust of the earth (Genesis 2:7), developing sexuality, literally, from the ground up. It was apparently an effort with a determined direction, to support the gift of gender that the image of God would then confer. Gender was the goal of His creative distinctions, and sex differences became the platform for the more profound gender reality. Or one might say that these sex differences provide receptacles for the gift of

²¹¹ On the question of whether two individuals, Adam and Eve, lived in history, we read as an evangelical would, that is, that they did, but the arguments drawn from the text’s teaching about women, men and gender do not depend upon it. A recent defense of the first couple’s historicity that is sensitive to modern challenges may be found in C. John Collins, *Did Adam and Eve Really Exist?: Who They Were and Why You Should Care* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2011).

²¹² Qualitative research proceeds within the world of the subjects in order to understand it so I adopt the practice of capitalizing pronouns referring to God. This practice, admittedly archaic, is helpful in portraying the authority ascribed to the biblical deity in the American evangelical cultural framework.

masculine and feminine. But they do not determine the meaning of gender nor is gender entirely constrained by them.²¹³

The New Testament repeats this profundity. The Apostle Paul claims that both woman and man are “out of God” (1Corinthians 11:11-12). Thus, God must contain both. First and foremost, then, the Bible sees gender as an additional gift upon our biology, shaping our identities and deeply revealing of God’s self.

2. The Equality of the Genders: The Same in Spirit

When the author first penned Genesis 1:27, it was big news in the ancient world. In other cultures, there was a clear hierarchy. Kings were made in the image of God. Nobles were a little lower. And at the bottom of the cosmological order were slaves and women.²¹⁴ To say that a woman was equally an image-bearer of God grated on the consciences of the ancients. Nonetheless, the earliest Bible books consistently asserted it. For example, in a book conservative scholars date in its original form to the Patriarchal Age, righteous Job, as part of his exhibition of full righteousness, gives inheritance to his daughters as well as his sons (Job 42:15). Contrast this with other ancient philosophers, sacred writings, or cultures, which either denigrate women or ignore them. Perhaps the uniqueness of the Bible’s stand on equality is best seen in its sanctity of sexual relations. Babylonian and Assyrian legal codes made specific provision for the regulation of

²¹³ So the Bible’s teaching comports with those sex difference researchers who distinguish between sex and gender.

²¹⁴ References are given to this sociology of the ancient Near East in J. Richard Middleton, “The Liberating Image? Interpreting the Imago Dei in Context,” *Christian Scholar’s Review* 24, no. 1 (1994): 16, 18, esp. 21; This hierarchy, with women at the bottom, would be the current cultural view whether one takes the Genesis author to be a Jerusalem elite priest in sixth century exile: J. Richard Middleton, *The Liberating Image: The Imago Dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2005), 201, 204, 211; or Moses himself: Richard L. Pratt, *Designed for Dignity: What God Has Made It Possible for You to Be* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Pub., 1993), 5, 9.

prostitutes for men;²¹⁵ women were to be treated as men pleased. But Mosaic Law unilaterally forbade both secular and sacred prostitution (Leviticus 19:29, Leviticus 21:9, Deuteronomy 23:17-18). The Bible is as concerned with women's honor as bearers of the divine image as it is with men's.

The New Testament emphatically reasserts women as equally bearing the image of God, and its authors do so, again, amidst contradiction from the surrounding cultural context, be it Jewish²¹⁶ or Roman.²¹⁷ In speaking about believers, Colossians 3:10 states that "the new self...is being renewed in...the image of its Creator," which statement was written to both men and women, as the letter's greeting, Colossians 1:2, shows.²¹⁸ But, besides these explicit statements, scripture conveys gender equality even more powerfully through its portrayal of women's spirituality, as shown by Table 10.

²¹⁵ James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*, 1st. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Pub. House, 1981), 39.

²¹⁶ Second Temple Period Jewish thought considered women to be inferior, expressed typically by Philo of Alexandria (20 BCE-50 CE), "...the mind occupies the rank of the man, the sensations that of the woman," or Josephus (37-100 CE), "a woman is inferior to her husband in all things" (and note that this represents Josephus' mature thought), or the Talmudic rabbi's, "Blessed art Thou who has not made me a woman..." Philo, *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, trans., Charles Duke Yonge, New updated ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Pub., 1993), "De Opificio Mundi" LIX (165); Flavius Josephus, *Josephus*, trans., H. St J. Thackeray, 10 vols., The Loeb Classical Library, vol. 1 (LCL186): The Life. Against Apion. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), II:201 (p373); Talmud: bMen. 43.

²¹⁷ "The Greeks thought very little of women and treated them largely as chattels...Ancient Rome was no less male-oriented than ancient Greece," Hurley, 75.

²¹⁸ The term, "ἀδελφοίς," "to the brethren," in Colossians 1:2 includes both women and men, as shown by the previous parallel phrase in the verse, "ἀγίοις," "...to the saints," obviously including women with men.

Table 10 –Women’s Spirituality Conveyed in the Bible

- Women pray to God. Their prayers are heard, answered and preserved: Genesis 25:22-23, 30:6, 30:22, 1Samuel 1:9-12, 2:1-10
- Women receive appearances of God: Genesis 16:7-14, Judges 13:3, 9
- Women bring sacrifices: Leviticus 12:6, 15:29, 1Samuel 1:24
- Women become Nazirites and vow to God: Numbers 6:2, 1Corinthians 7:5
- Women parent children w/equal standing and honor: Exodus 20:12, Leviticus 19:3, Proverbs 1:8, 31:26, Ephesians 6:1, 2Timothy 3:15 (after 1:5)
- Women are educated by the rabbi²¹⁹: Luke 10:39, 42, 1Corinthians 14:34-35
- Women receive salvation, equally “clothed in Christ.” Matthew 15:28, John 4:5-30, Acts 5:14, 8:12, 16:15, Galatians 3:27-28, 1Peter 3:7
- Women participate in Jesus’ ministry: Luke 8:1-3, Matthew 12:49-50²²⁰, Acts 1:14
- Women serve as Jesus’ parable illustrations: Matthew 13:33, 25:1-13, Luke 15:8-10, 18:1-8, Mark 12:38-44
- Women, as prophetesses, receive and deliver divine revelation: Genesis 25:22-23, Exodus 15:20, Judges 4:4-7, 2Kings 22:13-20, Luke 2:36-38, Acts 2:1-4 with vv17-18, after Joel 2:28-29, Acts 21:9
- Women serve in the public worship: Exodus 38:8, Psalm 148:7 with vv12-14, 2Chronicles 35:25, Ezra 2:65, 1Corinthians 11:5
- Women are named as important in ministry in the church, sometimes “fellow-workers,” e.g. Phoebe, Priscilla, Euodia, Syntyche: Acts 16:15, 18:2, 26, 21:9, Romans 16:1-3, Philippians 4:2-3, Colossians 4:15

In more subtle ways, the Bible also preaches the equality of women. For example, in both forms of the great Sabbath commandment (Exodus 20:8-11, Deuteronomy 5:12-15), God instructs the Israelites to keep members of their households from working, and then lists those household members. In the list of those one should keep from working on the Sabbath: servants, children, sojourners, etc., wives are not included. Why? It is simply because they are included in those being commanded. In other words, women are being equally charged with the responsibility of preventing work in their households.

²¹⁹ Again, Jesus’ policy on teaching women stands in contradistinction to current Jewish norm: “For rabbis, education means Torah scholarship, and more than once it is stated categorically that women are exempt from it” Catherine Hezser, *The Oxford Handbook of Jewish Daily Life in Roman Palestine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 59.

²²⁰ Jesus designates those doing the will of God as being more in truth his mother and sisters. He directs this feminine designation to his disciples, clarified in Mark’s account as his followers in general (Mark 3:32, 34), which included women.

So the God of the Bible is as concerned with women's gifts and involvement in His affairs as with men's. Gender issues are a big biblical topic precisely because, again, there are so many passages to inspect concerning women. The Apostle Paul, a principal New Testament author, shows his high regard for women, not only in his letters' greetings to them, but in comparing himself to a nursemaid or nursing mother (1Thessalonians 2:7). He has no qualms about identifying his role with a peculiarly womanly task for they are equally important to the biblical worldview. Thus, any conception of gender derived from the Bible must strongly affirm men and women as, first of all, equal before God, having the same Spirit (1Corinthians 12:4-6).

3. The Relevance of the Genders: Gender Matters in Relationship

In considering what constitutes the image of God in people, several theologians of the twentieth century have recognized human relationship to be principal.²²¹ This understanding arises from the more focused origin story of Genesis 2, portraying the Divine Image creation by the distinguishing of Eve from Adam, and their subsequent union (Genesis 2:7, 18-23). Genesis 1:27: "In the image of God He created them, male and female he created them..." is read in this light to mean that He created them in the Divine Image, in large part, to be in relationship with each other. If this is so, it would explain why the Bible's gender-specific passages largely concern the practices of individuals toward each other, rather than inherent qualities in isolation. If the Divine Image concerns relationship, and gender is a critical part of that image, it should not surprise us that the places where the Bible highlights gender differences are in instruction

²²¹ One prominent example is Karl Barth, in Karl Barth, Geoffrey William Bromiley, and Thomas F. Torrance, *Church Dogmatics*, 2d ed. (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), III.2. Another is Emil Brunner, *Dogmatics*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1950), vol 2.

in relationship with the other. Presumably, this is where gender particularly matters. Indeed, it is hard to find New Testament instruction to, or description of, one gender without instruction to, and description of, the other. We cannot find commands to men as men without finding commands to women nearby. There is a yin-yang character to the Bible's gender instruction.

As might be expected, if gender is closely tied to relationship, it is most intensely expressed in intense relationships. Depth of relationship brings gender into play. Therefore, the closer the relationship, the more gender matters. So the Bible distinguishes gender in covenant community and church relationships (Exodus 29:9, 29-30, 40:13-15, Numbers 36:1-13, 1Corinthians 14:33-36, 1Timothy 2:8-15), which are meant to be family tight (Galatians 6:10, Ephesians 2:19, 1Timothy 3:15, 1Peter 4:17).²²² It distinguishes gender again, most forcefully, in the context of marriage, as shown in Table 11.

Table 11 –The Distinguishing of Gender in Scriptures about Marriage

- Genesis 2:18 In prefacing the creation of woman with, “It is not good that man should be alone...,” God makes the new gender enterprise about relationship, leading to marriage in v24.
- Proverbs 31:10-31 The work of the wife makes the success of the husband in their marriage.
- Colossians 3:18-19 (as well in Ephesians 5:22-33) The Household Table Instruction on marriage distinguishes wives and husbands in its direction.
- 1Peter 3:5-7 (referring to Genesis 18:12) Husband and wife must consider gender as they conduct their marriage in the home.
- 1Corinthians 11:3-16 Husband and wife must consider gender as they enter the intimacy of worship together.
- Titus 2:5 Older women are to train the younger women to be “husband-lovers,”²²³ gender specific instruction focusing on the marriage relationship.

²²² The first two of these references to the church as God's “household” use the Greek word, “οἰκεῖος,” which means people who are related by kinship and form a closely knit group.

²²³ In this household teaching, the gender-distinction behavior is advised “that the Word of God be not discredited.” This verse, taken by itself, could mean that distinguishing gender is simply a cultural thing:

This emphasis also implies that the more distant the relationship, the less gender matters. In the body politic, or the workplace, for example, relationships do not generally attain to the level where gender distinction has a bearing. So, in terms of the leadership distinctive discussed below, while the Bible calls men rather than women to be church elders (1Corinthians 14:34, 1Timothy 2:12, 1Timothy 3:2), it does not contain teaching against female monarchs or business heads or, therefore by extension, female presidents, professors, CEO's, or bosses. This makes sense because, along a continuum, these positions do not involve closer relationships. Women and men may bring their own sex-differentiated gifting to such jobs, but the Bible's silence implies that in such capacities, gender is not prominent and does not deserve special consideration.

But in closer relationships, those found in the church and in the home, the Bible directs Divine Image-bearers to embrace their difference and explore what the complement means. Gender is presented as primarily a gift, a specialty, for developing another person in relationship. In a passage like Ephesians 5:22-31, the major marriage address in the New Testament, this is certainly the case. The husband takes on his masculinity in order to beautify his wife with attention and likewise the wife takes on her femininity in order to empower the husband with honor. In the Bible's view, the definition of manhood is a very feminine affair—its cultivation concerns and requires relationship with women. Similarly, the definition and cultivation of womanhood is a masculine affair.

“When in Rome, submit to your husband...” but the identity of Titus 2 teaching with other places where Paul ties it to creation clarify that the instruction is not just for Cretans. Rather, according to Paul, in this case the Roman culture expected the right thing.

This may explain why Christians find less agreement on what “makes a man” or “makes a woman” than on what they should be doing to one another. Their Bible doesn’t say, “A man is this” and “A woman is that,” but rather “Man, do this for her.” “Woman, do that for him.” It is clearer on action than on essence. It allows for differences, but these differences are hidden. The focus on action rather than ability portrays gender distinctives as specialties in which to operate.

The biblical account, then, shows sensitivity to the overlap of sex characteristics in men and women that have been uncovered by the sex differences studies of the last few decades, cited in chapter two.²²⁴ This research has shown that female and male characteristics, while numerous and definite, express themselves as statistical distributions, over-lapping bell curves and not absolute dichotomies. Likewise, the Bible does not insist on men or women having certain characteristics. Biblical gender is a call to use various sex differences, regardless of where one falls on the distribution curve, to serve one another. This sensitive biblical approach affords other insights into how Christians can understand sexual (that is male-female) differences which could be profitably discussed in another place.²²⁵

So, in this view, gender is primarily recognized through relationship, especially in relationship with the other gender. A woman finds what it is to be a woman in the company of other women and then, especially, of men. A man cannot understand himself as a man apart from his relationship to other men and, then, especially to women in his

²²⁴ Section: “How do Conservative Christians Understand and Practice Gender Distinction?”

²²⁵ These concern, for example, cautions in using biology as a guide to behavior, appreciation of God’s preference for variety, respect for limits in sexual traits, and direction on how to understand the exceptional.

life. Gender is something we are, but something we are for the purpose of someone else in close relationship to us. The Bible thus makes gender very much about what we do.

4. The Asymmetry of the Genders: Different Specialties for the Other²²⁶

The Genesis 2 creation narrative introduces three significant asymmetries in the account of the beginnings of the equal Image-bearers. Reading with a literary sensitivity to discern the author's intent, three differences between the first woman and first man surface, and these differences have implications for how people are to carry out God's call in close relationship with one another. As gender is about relationship, other biblical writers use these differences to show men and women how to serve each other in close quarters. The New Testament Apostle Paul recalls all three asymmetries in his teaching about gender specialties for one another.²²⁷

The first asymmetry is found in how God creates the man before the woman (v7, vv21-23) and commissions him first alone to the work of the humanity (v15). As one Christian author poeticized, the man is "always older."²²⁸ The priority translates into authority and representation, analogous to how the first-born of a family was supposed to function as its head (Deuteronomy 21:15-17, Genesis 27:19 with v29, Genesis 49:3-4).

²²⁶ As noted in CHAPTER TWO: A LITERATURE REVIEW..., Section: "How do Conservative Christians Understand and Practice Gender Distinction?" a number of evangelicals now understand the Bible to teach only symmetry of men and women in marriage or church, especially in the matter of authority. Examples include Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee, *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2005); Kenneth E. Bailey, "Women in the New Testament: A Middle Eastern Cultural View," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 22, no. 3 (1998). But this number remains very small and not reflective of the views of the interviewees in this study.

²²⁷ Other writers have noted the three distinctions in the Genesis narrative, also observing how Paul finds them theologically significant: Bruce A. Ware, "Male and Female Complementarity and the Image of God," in Grudem, 81-85; Hurley, 206-207. Elliot, *The Mark of a Man: Following Christ's Example of Masculinity*, 48, finds four distinctions.

²²⁸ C. S. Lewis, *Perelandra* (London: John Lane, 1943), 44.

Paul uses this same reasoning to explain how Christ, being prior and “first-born” to everything and everybody, has authority over all of them (Colossians 1:15-18), and points to this ordering of Adam before Eve to argue for asymmetrical behavior in church relationships (1Timothy 2:12-13, also possibly 1Corinthians 11:8).²²⁹ Equal before God, in relationship the man is to take charge and representation for her sake, the woman to promote him to that place of responsibility for his.

Genesis also pictures woman as being created differently from man. Surely the account preaches the equality of women and men. But Eve is not brought equally from the dust, suggesting that equality is not the only point to be made. Instead, Adam was formed from the dust (v7), and Eve from Adam’s rib. The conditions of this creative act are important. The rib is drawn from him while he is at rest (vv21-22). He experiences unrest, eventually resolved by their connection. When they meet, Adam exclaims in recognition, specifies her identity, and their resulting relationship brings him back to a place of rest (v23, also 3:20). So, while she gives him rest, a respite from the animals, he secures her with a name. This asymmetry also becomes significant in Paul’s gender reasoning (1Corinthians 11:7-8).

Thirdly, explicit in the text, their purposes differ. The woman is made to give the man something that he does not give to her. His gift to her is likewise not what she gives to him. Whereas the man is made to set up shop and work the new environment (v15), God expressly states that He creates the woman to be the unique, strong helper to the man in these callings, including the calling to be in relationship with her (v18, v20). In the narrative, God uses the same word, “helper” (עֵזֶר), for Eve that in other places is

²²⁹ In this discussion I adopt the common evangelical belief of Paul’s authorship of the Pastoral Epistles.

enthusiastically applied to God Himself in His great strength (Exodus 18:4, Deuteronomy 33:7, Deuteronomy 33:29, Psalm 115:9-11, Psalm 121:2, Psalm 124:8, Psalm 146:5).

Often these uses appear in a climax of proclamation of God's power. Thus its use here means that the woman possesses a divine power and ability to enable the man.

So the third asymmetry consists in her bringing divine empowerment to him for the enterprise of God's call to them, and his assuming that call's lead for her. Once more, the Apostle Paul draws significance from this asymmetry in the Genesis narrative when he speaks about how the glory that a woman gives to a man is different than vice-versa (1Corinthians 11:9-10).

These three, the temporal order of their origin, how they are made for each other, and their purposeful intent in the work, form the grand asymmetry of the genders' specialties. These, according to Paul and other biblical writers, have implications for how each is called to fulfill their representation of God together in relationship. Together, as equals, they share the common creation calls, such as to "be fruitful" and to "subdue the earth" (Genesis 1:28, Genesis 2:15). However, as women and men, they are to behave differently toward one another. These distinctive services provide structure for the intimate relationships of church and marriage.

Some of these individual specialties come out in the next few chapters of the Genesis narrative. A primary masculine specialty, flowing from the first of the three differences, is to represent, to take up the responsibility of being a "head." The name of the race, inclusive, is given twice as "man" (אָדָם), once in Genesis 1:26-27 and again in Genesis 5:1-2. Yet in between these two scriptures that masculine term is used exclusively for a man twenty-five times. The masculine representative purpose is thus

inserted into the name itself. In the biblical narrative, the Hebrew word functions just as it once did in English, meaning “mankind.” The inherent asymmetry is evidenced by contemporary objections to this use of the word “man” to stand for humanity and resultant substitutions of other terms for it in common usage.

Other parts of the narrative flesh out this representational assignment. Seth is born in the “likeness” and “image” of representative Adam, rather than Eve or both of them together, even though she gave birth to him (Genesis 5:3). Also, as noted above, the first man is given the place of naming the woman, affording her security in the identification. The naming serves as an ancient symbol of exercising authority (Genesis 1:28 with 2:19, Genesis 2:23, Genesis 3:20, Genesis 17:5, 15).²³⁰ Furthermore, even though the woman is first to sin (Genesis 3:6), the man, Adam, is held accountable first as the representative of the race (Genesis 3:9, 17). In the New Testament, Paul makes a similar determination about the representative responsibility of the man, Adam (1Corinthians 15:22, 45-49, Romans 5:12-21).

The great fall of humanity also shows the gender asymmetry, producing a distortion in their specialties. The fallen wife, it is said in Genesis 3:16, would consequently “desire” her husband but he would “rule over” her. The man’s “ruling over” (מִשָּׁל) can mean ruling by force, harshly and selfishly, a corrupting of the job of authority, which should involve securing, cultivating and leading in God’s call. Just such corruption the New Testament identifies as a husband’s sinful tendency toward his wife (Colossians 3:19). At the same time, the woman’s “desire” (תַּשׁוּקָה), forms a remarkable

²³⁰ So also concludes Covenant Theological Seminary Professor of Old Testament C. John Collins: “Naming seems...to be an exercise of authority,” in C. John Collins, *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P & R Pub., 2006), 138.

parallel sentence with Genesis 4:7, where sin “desires” Cain, that is, desires to master him.²³¹ No longer Strong Helper, deferrer, or giver of rest, Eve will seek to control Adam, by defiance or manipulation, again, indicated in apostolic teaching as a tendency for women (1Corinthians 11:16, 1Corinthians 14:36).²³² The New Testament, while pointing out these sinful tendencies in men and women, also pronounces the undoing of them through Christ, reaffirming the proper entrusting and self-giving asymmetry in His restoration of relationships and calling it “fitting in the Lord” (Colossians 3:18-19). So the asymmetry the Bible teaches is not subjugation, or even domination, which has so characterized the sad history of men with women in relationship, and which was blatantly predicted in Genesis 3:16. Rather, it is the valued and valuable submission appropriate to an equal.

The great theme of asymmetrical callings in a relationship of equality is continued in each of the Bible’s principal genres. First, the law delineates gender equality and distinction in both marriage and in the covenant community. The book of Deuteronomy commands distinguishing dress in front of each other (Deuteronomy 22:5) to acknowledge gender in the covenant community relationships. The book regulates divorce to protect the equality of women in honor (Deuteronomy 24:1-4) and then prescribes a one year leave from military service, or any public service for that matter, for all new husbands, that they would use their newlywed time to “bring happiness to”

²³¹ The word is attested in Samaritan and Mishnaic Hebrew with the meaning “urge, crave, impulse.” Some look to its only other biblical use, Song of Solomon 7:10 “My beloved’s desire is for me,” for the meaning of this word, where it connotes sexual desire. But, besides the cultural distance between Genesis and Song of Solomon, sexual desire is not a likely meaning for this sentence of curse since such desire, in the Genesis account, is a gift (Genesis 1:22, 1:28) and not the result of the fall.

²³² These two separate verses form the conclusions of two of Paul’s arguments on gender differentiation, both anticipating sinful opposition. He uses masculine inclusive terms in the sentences, meaning that Corinthian men were also involved in the wrongful attempts to erase gender distinction in worship.

(שִׂמְחָה)²³³ their new wives (Deuteronomy 24:5). Here the masculine securing specialty of Genesis 2:23 is codified in commandment.

The laws of the book of Numbers protect a wife from abuse while upholding a husband's limited authority over her (Numbers 5:11-31). They assert equality of privilege in community to women, to the making of vows (Numbers 30:3-4,6,9,11) and the ownership of property (Numbers 27:1-11). Yet, the book also calls women to allow husbandly or fatherly override of those vows (Numbers 30:5, 7-8, 12, 13, 16) and to empower the men by generational return of the land to husbands and fathers (Numbers 36). The husbands are called, correspondingly, to be proactively engaged with their wives' and daughters' concerns (Numbers 30:4, 7, 11, 14, 15) and to attend to the preservation and security of the whole community (Numbers 36), in other words, to lead.

The same equality and asymmetry is subsequently preached in the Old Testament narrative. The book of Judges, for example, in its apologetic for the monarchy, develops the theme of ineffective ruler-ship of charismatic but uncommitted and covenantally unfaithful leaders. The author means to show how poorly things go without a king, when "everyone does what is right in their own eyes" (Judges 17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 21:25). The book's chiastic design contrasts the godly wife, Achsah (Judges 3:7-11, along with 1:11-15), with the ungodly one, Delilah (Judges 16) to highlight the importance of women in accomplishing God's purposes in the land. Women throughout the book are lauded for acting bravely in a gendered way. The prophetess Deborah promotes reluctant Barak to

²³³ The verb of Deuteronomy 22:5 is sometimes translated "rejoice with his wife," based on a textual variant that puts the verb (שִׂמְחָה) in qal form. But the direct object marker on the word for "wife" makes the Mazoretic piel reading more likely to be original, meaning the making merry or happy is something the husband does to his wife.

battle (Judges 4:6-7). Jael uses her home-making skill to provide a place of “rest” to the general Sisera, only to save Israel from his clutches (Judges 4:17-21). But the author portrays with dishonor the many men who fail to lead as they should in this haywire world. Jephthah fails to protect his daughter and soon perishes (Judges 11:29-40, 12:7). Gideon fails to take up covenantal leadership for the community, followed by the vengeful leadership of usurping Abimelech, brought to his end by another woman using a domestic tool (Judges 9:53). The unnamed Levite allows his concubine to be treated by the Benjaminites like a disposable object, bringing all the tribes into severe judgment (Judges 19-21). And the General Barak refuses sole leadership to which he is promoted by Deborah (Judges 4:8), instead relinquishing victory—for God will have His victory—to the hand of a woman (Judges 4:9).

Similar analysis could be done on the writings (e.g., Proverbs 31:10-31), the later historical narrative (e.g., 1Samuel 25:1-42, 1Kings 2:1-3), and the prophets (e.g., Isaiah 3:1-4:1). In all parts of the Old Testament and its history, the offices of king and priest, the institutionalized leadership and representation of the covenant community, are asymmetrically reserved for men, and unique praise for asymmetrical acts in relationship is reserved for women.

It is significant that most instances of New Testament instruction on gender distinction look back to the Hebrew scriptures to establish their doctrine. 1Peter 3:1-7 looks back to Genesis 18. 1Corinthians 14:33-36 looks back to “the law,” most likely Numbers 30:3-13.²³⁴ The quintessential New Testament marriage teaching, Ephesians

²³⁴ Another possible referent of “the law” here is Genesis 3:16, the description of the curse. That is, Paul may be naming the book of Genesis, a member of the five “books of Moses,” as part of the law, as in the common division of the Hebrew scriptures into “the law and the prophets.” But the Numbers passage is the more likely referent, dealing with submission of women in the Covenant community, or the worship laws

5:22-33, the mystery of husband and wife illustrating Christ and the church, looks all the way back to Genesis 2 (v31) in its explication of the three asymmetries. Mark 10:2-12 (and Matthew 19:3-9) look back even further to Genesis 1. The New Testament authors see a unity to the teaching found there.

These New Testament scriptures portray, in various ways, how the ancient gift of gender is supposed to prevail by introducing an asymmetry in the way men and women behave in their close relationships. They are instructed to take on different specialties toward one another and to grow in them for one another. The “heading” under which the Apostle Paul expresses this asymmetry is headship (1Corinthians 11:3). In a marriage, a husband is to specialize in taking prerogative for his wife and the wife is to work at promoting her husband to that position of headship. He is to secure her as she gives him rest. He is to help her discern God’s call to them, and she is to divinely enable him for their task. In a church or family, the man is distinct in his gender by, consistently and with joy, laying down his life in leadership for the development of the women in his life. And the woman is distinctly a woman in, consistently and with joy, putting forward in support the men with whom she is in close relationship.

Before God, they remain equal. In Ephesians 5, for example, the wife’s equality before God dictates that the husband’s authority, though real, is limited, just as it was in the Mosaic books. She is only to submit to him “as to the Lord” (v22), meaning disobedience is expected if the husband contradicts the Lord’s command. Such disobedience is expected of the woman, Sapphira, by the Apostle Peter in the book of Acts (Acts 5:1-10). Peter fully expects Sapphira to disobey her husband by refusing to

generally restricting men (Aaron’s sons) to the office of priest.

participate in his act of dishonesty, and the punishment that falls from heaven upon her makes it clear that God does too.

5. The Purpose of the Genders: A Gift to Foster Intimacy

The New Testament ascribes great power to gendered behavior, emphasizing it as God's direct command (1Corinthians 14:37), making it the focal point of teaching about marriage (Colossians 3:18-19 Ephesians 5:22-33, 1Peter 3:1-7), and even investing it with the capability to convert (1Peter 3:1) and sanctify souls (Ephesians 5:25-27). A comparison of the two principal²³⁵ New Testament texts that look back to the "one flesh" passage of Genesis 2:24, namely Mark 10 and Ephesians 5, clarify the purpose and goal of this great gift of relational asymmetry.

In Mark 10, Jesus begins his final trek to Jerusalem, heading toward the climax of his ministry and necessarily clashing with the religious leaders. In verse two, the Pharisees test him with a question about divorce,²³⁶ leading Jesus to define marriage. He reaches back all the way to "the beginning" (verse six), and quotes Genesis 2:24, where marriage is instituted: "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and the two shall become one flesh" (verse seven). But because that Genesis verse begins with a "Therefore..." (Hebrew **עַל־כֵּן**), Jesus needs to supply a prior statement. He needs to summarize the reason for the distinctive closeness of the marriage relationship, to explain the serious nature of the rupture caused by divorce.

²³⁵ 1Corinthians 6:16 also refers to Genesis 2:24, but in an argument against prostitution. There is also a parallel to the Markan passage in Matthew 19:3-9.

²³⁶ We may note again the contrast between Jesus' teaching and the rabbi's of His day. Jewish law recognized adultery only as an offence against a husband: Hurley, 97. But Jesus clearly teaches in v12 of this passage that either the man or woman may be guilty of adultery against each other, as well as divorce each other.

In the original Genesis account, 2:24 follows the story of the creation of Eve and Adam's discovery of her, that is, the story originally distinguishing masculinity from femininity. Jesus summarizes this story by reaching even further back, to Genesis 1:27, to the act of creation of the gendered image of God: "He...made them male and female." Jesus joins this separate passage of Genesis 1 to the marriage institution passage of Genesis 2 in order to explain why people marry: "He...made them male and female. Therefore...the two shall become one flesh" (Mark 10:6-7). The Greek behind the "therefore" is ἕνεκεν τούτου,²³⁷ which denotes cause: "for this reason..."²³⁸ Thus, according to Jesus in the book of Mark, God's creation of gender is the cause of marriage. Marriage happens as one expression of gender distinction.

Note that to say, with Jesus,²³⁹ that gender causes marriage is not to say that marriage is the only expression of gender or that someone with gender should always get married. It is only saying that gender is the reason marriage exists. If people do marry, gender distinction is why it happens.

There is a connection implied in Jesus' argument to the Pharisees for forbidding regular divorce—a connection between gender and what makes marriage a sacred bond. There must be something which gender causes in marriage that Jesus does not want to see lost, though He does not say in the passage what it is.

Chapter five of the book of Ephesians, a letter celebrating the mysterious unity and ministry of the church, takes up salvation's impact on home relationships. In the

²³⁷ Mark and Matthew follow the Septuagint for Genesis 2:24.

²³⁸ Like most similar conjunctions, ἕνεκεν can be a marker of purpose (instead of cause), but that meaning is rare for ἕνεκεν and the context of Jesus' argument here excludes it.

²³⁹ This discussion makes the evangelical assumption of Mark's accuracy in preserving the teaching of Jesus.

extended and lofty explanation of marriage responsibilities (verses twenty-two through thirty-three), Genesis 2:24 is again quoted (verse thirty-one). This time, what precedes the quotation's "therefore" is the Apostle Paul's discussion²⁴⁰ of intimacy in the midst of gender distinction practices.

Verse twenty-eight encourages husbands to think of their wives as their own bodies. A person's body could be seen as a possession, but it is a possession unlike any other one might "own." For it is also one's self. Our identities are wrapped up in our bodies. It would be nearly impossible to differentiate them. Marriage, argues Paul, brings one's wife into a dimension of one's own identity. A more profound image of intimacy is hard to imagine. Indeed, "he who loves his wife loves himself" (verse twenty-eight). The passage goes on (verse twenty-nine) to elaborate on that intimacy. A husband is called to nourish and cherish his wife in the same way that he cares for his own body, defining a kind of intimacy that promulgates growth. The passage implies a development through intergendered relationships that is different from the benefits of relationships with others of the same gender.

The text then says "Therefore...the two shall become one flesh" (verse thirty-one). In other words, therefore people get married. But this passage is different from the passage in the book of Mark. This quotation does not follow the Septuagint (ancient Greek translation), like the gospel quotation of the Genesis verse does. Rather, it uses a different Greek prepositional phrase, ἀντὶ τούτου, to translate the Hebrew "therefore." This word, usually meaning, "in the place of," or "in behalf of," more easily lends itself to an interpretation of purpose than cause. Thus: "in behalf of" or for the benefit of

²⁴⁰ Paul's authorship of the book of Ephesians, as claimed in Ephesians 1:1, is accepted according to our method.

intimacy, people marry. The passage seems to be saying that these kinds of growing experiences of intimacy are the purpose of marriage.

This is the New Testament summary of the “therefore” of the Genesis two-becoming-one-flesh. Jesus says that marriage’s cause is gender. Paul says that marriage’s purpose is intimacy. If the two are to agree, it must be because gender specialties advance the experience of intimacy. Asymmetry is used to make love.

Again, it must be noted that such a doctrine does not preclude other purposes for gender. Neither does it consign a single person to a life without intimacy. As mentioned above, the New Testament portrays the church as the family or household of God. Since the church is God’s family, the relationships approach the closeness of a family. In fact, they may be even closer (Mark 3:33-34, Matthew 12:48). Closeness is where gender matters. One is not surprised, therefore, to encounter the practice of gender distinction repeatedly in church relationships (Luke 6:13-16 and Luke 8:1-3, 1Corinthians 11:3-8, 1Corinthians 14:2-35, 1Timothy 2:11-15, 1Timothy 3:1-13, 1Timothy 5:3-16) along with the expectation of intimacy in these relationships. So the Apostle Paul seems to refer to a law about gender distinction in marriage (Numbers 30:3-13) to establish a gender practice in the churches (1Corinthians 14:34). Another passage (1Timothy 2:8-15) begins speaking of church relationship behaviors (verses eight through twelve) and justifies them by speaking of a marriage (verses thirteen through fifteen). Principles of family life and those of church life are not clearly distinguished. So intimacy is intended for the single person in church relationships. Besides this, Paul affirms a special intimacy that single people have with the Lord as part of the apostle’s being-single-is-better argument to the troubled Corinthians (1Corinthians 7:32-35).

This connection between gender and intimacy is apparent in the events of Genesis 3. The historic fall of humanity introduced separate pain into each gendered image. But, together, their marriage would involve desire to master and harsh rule over, that is destructive conflict (as would, apparently also, church relations, 1Corinthians 14:34-36). It follows that one of the purposes of originally introducing this asymmetry was to achieve the opposite of destructive conflict: constructive intimacy. In this asymmetry, woman and man are drawn together and become crucial to each other.

Perhaps the clearest way to see how the asymmetry is supposed to cultivate intimacy is in the Bible's most exalted relationship of all, the relationship of the Godhead. The Persons of God are sometimes expressed as Father, Son, and Spirit (Matthew 28:19, 2Corinthians 13:14), or First, Second, and Third Members of the Godhead. In what is held out as the most intense relationship of the universe, a functional adoption of headship and submission rests atop a fundamental equality. The Second Member of the Trinity, equal in power and glory, voluntarily submits (e.g., John 5:30, John 8:28) in promotion of the First Member, and the First Member voluntarily assumes authority (e.g., Matthew 24:36, John 12:28) for the honoring of the Second Member. They thereby abide in one another (John 14:10, John 15:10). In fact, in what may be the most profound asymmetry, the Second is represented as seeking only to do the will of the First (Psalm 40:8, Hebrews 10:7, John 8:29, John 6:38, Romans 8:34, Hebrews 1:3, Hebrews 1:13, 1Peter 3:22). Consequently, the Second now sits at the right hand of the First, that seated scene perhaps conveying the greatest intimacy it is possible to enjoy. In 1Corinthians 11:3, Paul draws a comparison between this Trinitarian dynamic and men and women in marital relationship. His main point seems to be that married partners, also

leaning into these specialties, reflect the image of God and develop His intimacy between themselves (1Corinthians 11:11-12).

This study does not address all the complexity of gender or answer all the questions people might ask about the Bible's instruction on current gender practices in church and marriage. But one would expect, based on these five main themes, Bible-influenced marriages and churches to promote and practice a gender distinction of asymmetrical specialties atop fundamental equality. And, if the Bible is right, one should find a consequent depth in the intimacy in their relationships.

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