

**Complementarianism, Culture, and Our Churches:  
Living Our Convictions in the Age of the Gender Wars  
Sovereign Grace Pastor's Conference 2023**

**Core Theological Definitions of Complementarianism**

Affirmations 1-3 of the Danvers Statement:

1. "Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood.
2. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart.
3. Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin..."

Sovereign Grace Statement of Faith:

**Man as Male and Female**

Men and women are both made in the image of God and are equal before him in dignity and worth. Gender, designated by God through our biological sex, is therefore neither incidental to our identity nor fluid in its definition, but is essential to our identity as male and female. Although the fall distorts and damages God's design for gender and its expression, these remain part of the beauty of God's created order. Men and women reflect and represent God in distinct and complementary ways, and these differences are to be honored and celebrated in all dimensions of life. To deny or seek to remove these differences is to distort a fundamental way in which we glorify God as male and female.

**Marriage, Sexuality, and Singleness**

Biblical manhood and womanhood enrich human flourishing in all its dimensions. God instituted marriage as the union of one man and one woman who complement each other in a one-flesh union that ultimately serves as a type of the union between Christ and his church. This remains the only normative pattern of sexual relations for humanity. Husbands are to exercise headship sacrificially and with humility, and wives are to serve as helpers to their husbands, willingly supporting and submitting to their leadership. Together these complementary roles bring joy and blessing to each other and display the beauty of God's purposes to the world. Single men and women are no less able to enjoy and honor God and no less important to his purposes. They also are to give expression to God's image in distinct and complementary ways, flourishing as his image bearers and bringing him glory in their singleness.

Our core theological convictions *have not changed* about any of these positions. But the context – culturally, politically, even within evangelicalism – has changed dramatically!

## Identifying Dangers to Our Complementarian Convictions and Practice

### Egalitarianism 3.0: the third edition of *Discovering Biblical Equality*

- See *Eikon* 5.1 (Spring 2023) for a review of each chapter of this new edition.
- Key points:
  - Egalitarianism is still a present danger. The issue is not settled – which leads to...
  - Egalitarianism is an inherently unstable position in the current cultural climate. See especially the arguments against gender essentialism and for some form of trans ideology by Christa McKirland, reviewed by Colin Smothers.<sup>1</sup>

### “Dominion Masculinity” – A Return to Patriarchy?

- Authors: various publications by Dominic Tennant and Michael Foster, Zachary Garris, D. Michael Clary, C.R. Wiley, Josh Hawley
- Main arguments:
  - Patriarchy (often glossed as “rule of fathers”) should be preferred and advocated for over complementarianism.

“Patriarchy is inevitable. God has built it into the fabric of the cosmos.”<sup>2</sup>

“Christianity is Patriarchal [the chapter title to Ch. 4]...the word ‘complementarian’ does not go far enough. While it is true that men and women complement each other, even egalitarians can affirm this in some sense (e.g. sexual complementarity). We must speak more forcefully that this, and thus we need a word that communicates male rule better. Enter patriarchy.”<sup>3</sup>

- Masculinity must be based on rightly taking dominion

“The reason that God creates man on the earth...is for *productive, representative rulership*. This is what it means to exercise dominion: to fruitfully order the world in God’s stead.”<sup>4</sup>

“God has made the world, but it seems there is more work yet to be done. There is chaos yet to subdue, darkness to confront. Creation is an unfinished project. Men are there to help finish it.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Colin J. Smothers, “Rejecting Gender Essentialism to Embrace Transgenderism?: A Response to Christa McKirland, ‘Image of God and Divine Presence,’” *Eikon* 5, no. 1 (Spring 2023): 44–51.

<sup>2</sup> Michael Foster and Dominic Bnonn Tennant, *It’s Good to Be a Man: A Handbook for Godly Masculinity* (Moscow: Canon Press, 2022), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Zachary M. Garris, *Masculine Christianity* (Ann Arbor: Reformation Zion Publishing, 2021), 77–78.

<sup>4</sup> Foster and Tennant, *It’s Good to Be a Man*, 19. Emphasis original.

<sup>5</sup> Josh Hawley, *Manhood: The Masculine Virtues America Needs* (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Publishing, 2023), 22.

- A revitalization of masculinity is needed for society/culture

“There is widespread apostasy in the West. Apostasy is the act of abandoning the Christian faith, and that is exactly what is happening in large numbers among formerly Christian nations.”<sup>6</sup>

“Male rule will upset many progressives. Let it. The husband holds authority over his wife. Only men may be pastors and elders. Only men may be soldiers and civil leaders. And women should help their husbands and have lots of babies. This is masculine Christianity.”<sup>7</sup>

- In some camps (primarily Garris): complementarianism was fatally flawed from the start.

“While complementarianism has had a positive influence in many ways, it also set itself up for problems from the start. One of these problems was that the leaders of the movement opted for the clunky title ‘complementarianism’ instead of something simpler and more descriptive, such as ‘patriarchy.’ The desire to avoid the negative connotations of a word like patriarchy is somewhat understandable, but with its root words meaning ‘father rule,’ patriarchy aptly describes the Bible’s teachings... But instead of seeking to redeem a more descriptive word, the leaders of this movement sought to promote the newly-invented ‘complementarianism...’

“Did the complementarian leaders not realize that everyone affirms that men and women complement each other in some sense? The leaders of the complementarian movement chose a name that does not even distinguish their position from that of feminists. This would not have been possible with the bolder and more historic term ‘patriarchy,’ which feminists would never affirm.”<sup>8</sup>

- Critiques:

- By tying masculinity to Western civilization, this camp tends to become focused on visions of cultural transformation, often involving politics. When this becomes central to our vision of complementarianism (or the church), it is a mistake in biblical priorities.
- These authors have a deficient biblical theology operating beneath their vision of masculinity, which often minimizes the centrality of the church.

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<sup>6</sup> Zachary M. Garris, *Masculine Christianity*, 29.

<sup>7</sup> Zachary M. Garris, *Masculine Christianity*, 281.

<sup>8</sup> Zachary M. Garris, *Masculine Christianity*, 55–56.

- They often major on minor points of application (the necessity of an economically productive household, or the priority of having many children) in a way that risks equating biblical principle with wise practice.

“Aspirational Masculinity” – A “God-lite” Search for Meaning:

- Jordan Peterson and secular online influencers

“What they [Peterson and other influencers] have in common is that they’re finding a receptive audience among teenage boys and young men with a genuine desire for direction that isn’t being served by the hollowed-out institutions of traditional society... Young men today often feel as if their needs are secondary to those of their female peers. Society tends to speak about the well-being of men and boys as a means to an end. There’s a lot of hand-wringing about how a decline in the number of marriageable men makes it harder for women to find husbands. Some argue that male struggles cause a litany of social ills like crime and child neglect. Church leaders justify outreach to men as a way to reach women and children.

“By contrast, online men’s influencers seek to help men themselves, to show them how to improve as people and achieve their own goals. To be sure, some of those goals are immoral, such as taking sexual advantage of women. But many are worthy, like health or career success. Online influencers treat men’s hopes and dreams as important in their own right.”<sup>9</sup>

- Renn’s summary of what these figures offer: they are “by men, for men,”<sup>10</sup> “treat men like they matter,”<sup>11</sup> do not promote a weak vision of “servant leadership,”<sup>12</sup> and give “news men can use.”<sup>13</sup>

- Jordan Peterson’s main arguments:

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<sup>9</sup> Aaron M. Renn, “Opinion | What Jordan Peterson Can Teach Church Leaders,” *Wall Street Journal*, September 29, 2023, sec. Opinion, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/what-jordan-peterson-can-teach-church-leaders-young-men-influencer-masculinity-22bb318c>.

<sup>10</sup> Aaron M. Renn, “By Men For Men,” August 30, 2022, <https://www.aaronrenn.com/p/by-men-for-men>.

<sup>11</sup> Aaron M. Renn, “Treat Men Like They Matter,” August 30, 2022, <https://www.aaronrenn.com/p/treat-men-like-they-matter>.

<sup>12</sup> Aaron M. Renn, “The Problem With Servant Leadership,” August 30, 2022, <https://www.aaronrenn.com/p/servant-leadership>.

<sup>13</sup> Aaron M. Renn, “News Men Can Use,” August 30, 2022, [https://www.aaronrenn.com/p/news-men-can-use?r=1rgfdc&utm\\_medium=email](https://www.aaronrenn.com/p/news-men-can-use?r=1rgfdc&utm_medium=email).

- Masculinity is productive generosity. Men should be the kind of man a woman would desire as a partner by fighting their dragons and developing themselves.<sup>14</sup>
- Men should arm themselves to become “tameable beasts:” capable of the right kind of aggression to protect and build, but harnessing that aggression to not harm. This includes the necessity of educational development to become a leader.<sup>15</sup>
- Men should not approach relationships asking how to find the right person, but how to be the right person. In parenting, the masculine spirit pushes children to develop and promotes growth while the feminine spirit nurtures and promotes acceptance.<sup>16</sup>
- In parenting, a father must learn to care for his wife as she embraces the sacred role of mother. This includes both accepting the reality that life will include suffering and hardship, and resisting the impulse to flee from commitment and avoid pain.<sup>17</sup>
- Critiques:
  - Peterson is an eclectic, pragmatist-philosopher-life coach figure who adopts the authoritative persona of a courageous public intellectual, willing to say hard things and challenge untruthful societal practices. (See his opposition to the transgender movement.)<sup>18</sup> As such Christians may see him as an ally, especially since he also grants legitimacy to established religion and treats the Bible as a serious intellectual work. However...
  - This is not the same as actually embracing the gospel or the Bible as God’s authoritative self-revelation. The eclecticism in his approach leads to mixing a form of biblical morality with Freudian and Jungian psychology, literary studies, and pragmatism. On this basis, he commends marriage but also does not foreclose sexual experimentation prior to marriage.
  - Most fundamentally, his vision of masculinity is Christ-less and self-constructed. It is better than the cultural chaos, but a man could believe it, embrace it, live it...and still fail as a man and be condemned to hell for rejecting the Lord Jesus Christ.

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<sup>14</sup> Jordan Peterson, “Dragons, Monsters, and Men, Episode 1: ‘What Makes a Man?’” The Daily Wire, accessed October 27, 2023, <https://www.dailywire.com/episode/episode-1-what-makes-a-man>.

<sup>15</sup> Jordan Peterson, “Dragons, Monsters, and Men, Episode 2: ‘Arm Yourself,’” The Daily Wire, accessed October 27, 2023, <https://www.dailywire.com/episode/episode-2-arm-yourself>.

<sup>16</sup> Jordan Peterson, “Dragons, Monsters, and Men, Episode 3: ‘Be the Prince, You’ll Find the Princess,’” The Daily Wire, accessed October 31, 2023, <https://www.dailywire.com/episode/episode-3-be-the-prince-you-ll-find-the-princess>.

<sup>17</sup> Jordan Peterson, “Dragons, Monsters, and Men, Episode 4: ‘Be Great,’” The Daily Wire, accessed October 31, 2023, <https://www.dailywire.com/episode/episode-4-be-great>.

<sup>18</sup> Shannon Power, “Jordan Peterson Saying ‘Trans Women Are Men’ Sparks Furor,” Newsweek, July 3, 2023, <https://www.newsweek.com/transgender-jordan-peterson-trans-women-men-1810519>.

## Gender-Neutral Discipleship: “A Woman Can Do Anything an Unordained Man Can Do”

“Stated the way we do at Redeemer: anything that an unordained man is allowed to do, a woman is also allowed to do.”<sup>19</sup>

“Nevertheless, as we consider what God calls us to as men and women, we need to get our chronology right; we begin with the call to godliness given equally to all. Then we move to the second question: ‘What does being godly mean for me as a man or a woman, a husband, wife, mother, son, sister and so on?’ And we need to get our perspective right: the aim is Christlikeness. That has implications for my roles in life, but the goal I am striving towards is to be like Jesus, rather than trying to measure up to a certain picture of a man or a woman.”<sup>20</sup>

“Some discussions over gender have tried to produce definitions of masculinity and femininity. We appreciate the desire to specify that, but it's very difficult to do in practice – such definitions almost always tend to over- or underemphasise our similarities or differences. Whereas God, in his wisdom, has not given us a dictionary entry but painted a picture: a common picture of godliness and discipleship that isn't one thing for a man and another for a woman, but is lived and expressed through our two different genders as we seek to follow Jesus together.”<sup>21</sup>

“What’s clear is that there is no indication in the New Testament that women were appointed elders of churches. Women are *capable* of what is required of elders, such as being in right standing with God and people; of having a consistent life; of loving and serving those under their care; and of teaching what is sound doctrine and warning others against false doctrine. These are things we would expect of many mature Christian women (and men). But we do not see women doing this in the *context* of the office of elder.”<sup>22</sup>

- Main Argument: complementarianism is based on key texts about marriage and church. In anything not specifically addressed by those texts, our presumption should be that men and women are equal.
- Critique:
  - To the phrase “unordained woman...” What about being a spiritual father? Is gender irrelevant to our role in the family of God? Is discipleship really gender-neutral? (More on this below.)
  - Arbitrarily drawing lines: maleness and femaleness are irrelevant in most areas of life except these few areas...will this satisfy a generation that comes of age amid widespread gender confusion?

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<sup>19</sup> Kathy Keller, *Jesus, Justice, and Gender Roles* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 21.

<sup>20</sup> Graham Beynon and Jane Tooher, *Embracing Complementarianism: Turning Biblical Convictions into Positive Church Culture* (The Good Book Company, 2022), 59.

<sup>21</sup> Graham Beynon and Jane Tooher, *Embracing Complementarianism*, 63–64.

<sup>22</sup> Graham Beynon and Jane Tooher, *Embracing Complementarianism*, 73.

## Post-Complementarian Gender Roles?

- Proponents: Aaron Renn, Mere Orthodoxy
- Central “mood:” complementarianism is dead/dying, but gender is meaningful and cultural trends should be resisted.

“...complementarianism will die. Again, like the Episcopal Church, that doesn’t mean it will go totally extinct any time soon. But the life force has gone out of it and it’s already starting to fade. Its most robust defenders are what I labeled ‘positive world’ Christians in [Masc #13](#). That group is mostly low status and has a very poor understanding of how cultural power and cultural change works, thus are almost always rolled by those who do.

“The question is then what comes after complementarianism. As always, we must discern the truth, align ourselves with it, and speak it. So if you are a pastor who genuinely believes complementarianism is true, then believe it, teach it, live it. The same for egalitarianism. I have personally concluded that both complementarianism and egalitarianism are modern doctrines that are in significant error and should be rejected. I don’t claim to have a complete replacement. It’s something that will require significant study and development and thus will fall to others on the theological front.”<sup>23</sup>

“The problem with complementarianism is that far too often it reduces this deeply natural indwelling of the world in gendered forms into a set of rules about which the two variants of the movement [maximalist or minimalist] will debate, some winning on some points and the other winning on the rest.

“But this is not how reality works and our existence as gendered beings in God’s world resists both attempts to define too many hard-and-fast rules *and* attempts to artificially constrain the identities imposed upon us by our gender. If there is a cardinal failing of complementarianism, it is found in those last three letters. Even at its best, complementarianism makes an ‘ism’ of something which is natural, which does not need to be systematized and positively defined. It would be better to say that it is entered into, although that entering in has become more difficult than ever in a day defined by such rampant individualism and disregard for nature...

“The atomized order of 21st century liberalism is fragmenting and unsustainable with its incoherencies presenting unique missional challenges as Christians seek to discern the ways in which Christians can and should adopt the cultural garb of the world it seeks to evangelize. As liberalism’s opposition to nature becomes more apparent, these difficulties will be intensified and the minimalist solution will fail because one cannot preserve Christian practice in the home and family if liberalism is designed, as our iteration of it is, to undermine and destroy both. If the scriptural norms about gender are to be preserved, then we must also preserve the natural order in which those norms are seen to be coherent

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<sup>23</sup> Aaron M. Renn, “Newsletter #30: Complementarianism Is a Baby Boomer Theology That Will Die With the Baby Boomers,” August 30, 2022, <https://www.aaronrenn.com/p/newsletter-30-complementarianism>.

and lively. If the places that create certain sorts of people are destroyed, then those people will cease to exist.”<sup>24</sup>

- Critique: doesn’t actually engage in exegesis or theology. Result: weakened confidence in Scripture, and vulnerability to unseen “doctrinal winds” pushed on us by culture. Renn: pragmatism. Meador: localism. But neither are actually engaging the biblical and theological basis for complementarianism.

Transitional question: so where does that leave us? Renn concludes his Newsletter #30 this way:

“With egalitarianism poised at a major redefinition point, and complementarianism’s pending demise, the question then is not a rehash of battles between the two from decades past, but rather how we move forward from here towards a time when the Boomers will no longer be calling all the shots and America is a very different place.”<sup>25</sup>

I differ with Renn on complementarianism’s “pending demise.” Instead, what we need is...

## **A Robust Theological and Textual Reaffirmation of Complementarianism**

### Two Weddings

“The history of the human race begins with a wedding.”<sup>26</sup>

- Key point: The centrality of Genesis 1-2 in any theological vision of human identity. And what is the moment that crowns both the narrative of the days of creation (Gen 1) and the creation of man (Gen 2)? A wedding.

“God created the woman *from* the man and *for* the man (1 Cor 11:8-9), but also simultaneously *unto* the man, even as he created the man *unto* the woman. God made two out of one, so that he could then make the two into one, one soul and one flesh.”<sup>27</sup>

“As soon as he saw her, he recognized her; his recognition was a knowledge born of love. He saw in her no alien being, but a being just like himself; she possessed the same nature that he had; she displayed the same image of God that had been bestowed upon him; and yet she was different from him, with her own sex, character, and vocation. Like a whoop of joy, like a wedding song, the words came forth from his lips: This is now finally flesh of my flesh and bone of my bone!”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Jake Meador, “Will Complementarianism Die with the Baby Boomers? | Mere Orthodoxy,” Mere Orthodoxy, accessed October 26, 2023, <https://mereorthodoxy.com/complementarianism>.

<sup>25</sup> Aaron M. Renn, “Newsletter #30.”

<sup>26</sup> Herman Bavinck, *The Christian Family*, trans. Nelson D. Kloosterman (Grand Rapids: Christian’s Library Press, 2012), 1.

<sup>27</sup> Bavinck, *The Christian Family*, 7, italics original.

<sup>28</sup> Bavinck, *The Christian Family*, 4–5.



- Key point: Revelation 19 and the final wedding. A thought experiment: why does God reveal the future of the people of God through the image of a *wedding*?

“The eschatological goal of creation is not an amorphous, unknown alternative state. Rather than drawing the cloud of unknowing across our future destiny, Scripture instead unveils a bride who is simultaneously a city: a covenant union experienced in a protected space. This suggests that human marriage, and the created structures of maleness and femaleness (human gender identity), are themselves shaped by the enduring reality of the eschatological bride and her bridegroom.”<sup>29</sup>

“Unlike other imagery, the associations evoked by the symbol of the bride and the wedding feast occur in the domain of joy, fellowship, and unity. Furthermore, there is the background of both human marriage with its covenantal structure, as described in Scripture and as a part of human experience, and the persistent metaphor of marriage between the Lord and his people throughout the Old Testament. Considering how much of that theme is occupied with unfaithfulness and spiritual adultery, rather than covenant faithfulness, Revelation’s marital imagery appropriately functions as a canonical capstone to that figure in Scripture.”<sup>30</sup>

- The link between the creation horizon and the new creation horizon: human marriage as a type of Christ’s relationship to his bride. Ephesians 5:22-33 and its use of Genesis 2:24.

“Marriage was instituted so that the glory of the King would come to light in the multitude of his subjects. Once it has attained this goal, marriage itself will pass away. The shadow will make way for the substance, the symbol for the reality. The history of the human race began with a wedding; it also ends with a wedding, the wedding of Christ and his church, of the heavenly Lord with his earthly bride.”<sup>31</sup>

### The Two Households that Matter Most

In light of those two horizons, the battle over complementarianism and gender identity is ultimate about the purpose of human existence. Put in a series of questions:

- What are men and women *for*? Fruitful covenant relationships.
- Where are those fruitful covenant relationships experienced? The two households that matter most: the human family (marriage), and the family of God (the church).

But note: this puts our complementarian convictions at the *center* of our individual and ecclesiastical identity. Furthermore, there is an *intrinsic link* between these two households.

**1 Tim 3:4-5** He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church?

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<sup>29</sup> Josh Blount, “‘This Mystery Is Profound’: The Eschatological Marriage In Revelation, Isaiah, And Ephesians 5, With Implications For The Church’s Witness And Human Gender Identity” (Unpublished Dissertation, Philadelphia, Westminster Theological Seminary, 2023), 21.

<sup>30</sup> Josh Blount, “This Mystery Is Profound,” 62.

<sup>31</sup> Bavinck, *The Christian Family*, 161.

**1 Tim. 3:14-16:** I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, <sup>15</sup> if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth. <sup>16</sup> Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness: He was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

But note also: the penultimacy of the human family, and the ultimacy of the family of God. Both are deeply important. But one endures for eternity.

Illustrating the relationship between these two households from one moment in the corporate life of the family of God: the Lord's Supper.

In light of all this: how do we strengthen our complementarian convictions as we pastor in the household of God?

### Pastoring Men and Women in the Family of God

- Identify and fight expressive individualism *everywhere*
  - For definitions of expressive individualism, see Trueman's works.<sup>32</sup> In one slogan, expressive individualism is "You do you!" And "you do you!" destroys "Wives, submit to your husbands" and "You who are younger, be subject [i.e., submit!] to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.'"
  - This is not so much about a sermon series on individualism (it might be that). More deeply: *everything* about our gatherings and our life together should orient us outwards to find our true identity in Christ as defined by his Word. That is the only faithful option.

"A creature really has a choice between only two options: either it chooses to be its own creator and thereby cease to be a creature, or it must be and remain a creature from beginning to end, and therefore owes its existence and the specific nature of its existence only to God."<sup>33</sup>

- Create thick communities:
  - The indescribable beauty of radically *non*-gender neutral discipleship.

**1 Tim. 5:1-3** Do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters, in all purity. Honor widows who are truly widows.

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<sup>32</sup> Carl R. Trueman, *The Rise and Triumph of the Modern Self: Cultural Amnesia, Expressive Individualism, and the Road to Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020); Carl R. Trueman, *Strange New World: How Thinkers and Activists Redefined Identity and Sparked the Sexual Revolution* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2022).

<sup>33</sup> Herman Bavinck, *Reformed Dogmatics: God and Creation*, ed. John Bolt, trans. John Vriend, vol. 2 (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 376.

**Titus 2:1-6:** But as for you, teach what accords with sound doctrine. Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness. Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled. Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled.

**1John 2:12-14:** I am writing to you, little children, because your sins are forgiven for his name's sake. I am writing to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I am writing to you, young men, because you have overcome the evil one. I write to you, children, because you know the Father. I write to you, fathers, because you know him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abides in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

- The inescapable necessity of spiritual fathers and mothers in an age of broken homes and marriages.

**1 Cor. 4:15:** For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

**Rom 16:13:** Greet Rufus, chosen in the Lord; also his mother, who has been a mother to me as well.

- Rightly locate the pastoral role within the household of God: the pastoral office and the bride of Christ

**John 3:27-30** John answered, "A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven. You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.' The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. He must increase, but I must decrease."

**1 Pet. 5:1-4** So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed: shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.