

MEN AND WOMEN IN CONTEMPORARY CULTURE: THE INTERSECTION OF
THEOLOGY AND THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

An Essay

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By

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INTRODUCTION

My thoughts are being offered to you from a social-psychological perspective as well as lifelong Bible student. I will offer both a macro and a micro perspective.

My undergraduate degree and Lutheran Teachers Diploma is from Concordia, Seward. I attended Concordia, River Forest, Il. as a young coed for two years but finished my undergraduate work as an adult of 34 at Concordia, Seward, Nb. while my husband, Gerald, was Associate Professor at Concordia. My minor was in sociology. My Masters work was done at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln in the area of Human Development and Family. My emphasis was parent/child relations. My Ph.D. is also from UNL from the college of Adult and Continuing Education with an emphasis in Marriage and Family Counseling.

I have been working as an individual, marriage and family therapist since 1978 when we moved to Dallas, Tx. where my husband accepted a call as Headmaster to Dallas Lutheran High School. In 1979, I worked at Dallas Christian Counseling Services. In 1983, I was hired by Lutheran Social Services of the South to initiate a counseling program. In 1998, five Lutheran therapists joined together and incorporated a non-profit organization called Lutheran Counseling Services. I am a Licensed Professional Counselor, a Licensed Marriage and Family Therapist and a Clinical Member of the Association of Marriage and Family Therapists.

I attended a Lutheran school from 4th to 8th grade and felt a deep commitment to a relationship with the Lord as a young person. I entered Concordia, River Forest in 1958 and began preparation for teaching and academic study of the Bible. I began serious Bible study as a young mother of 24 when after four years of teaching at Lutheran Schools, my husband and I committed to the philosophy of the stay at home Mom. We have four children born from 1964 to 1969. We lived on Long Island from 1960 to 1970 where my husband taught at Long Island Lutheran High School. From the time my first child was born I was involved in Home Bible Study Groups once and more likely twice a week with a group of women and then with our husbands in a couple Bible Study.

When we moved to Seward, we initiated Bible Study groups in homes among our colleagues. As a faculty/student advisor, my husband invited students to our home for Bible Study and together we led those studies.

As I moved into a graduate degree with the goal of teaching Sociology, Human Development and Family courses at the high school level, I believed it was necessary to integrate Scripture with the secular university perspective. When the doors opened for a Ph.D. in Marriage and Family Counseling I felt even more acutely that I must clarify my understanding of God's intent for male/female relationships. As a result I continued studying Scripture with this always in mind. I take very seriously my responsibility as a Christian teacher to teach in truth and purity.

One might question the wisdom or necessity of offering this much information about myself. I was taught as a young student that an essay is basically an "I think" paper. As a therapist I operate from what is called a Cognitive Behavioral Perspective. A shorthand explanation of the theory is to say that what we believe determines what we feel and what we believe and feel determines what we do.

What a person thinks is determined by the experiences of the individual, their personality, the belief system they have developed, the culture they were raised in which will include their ethnicity, their childhood home and school environment, whether they grew up in a small town or large city and even the culture of that particular town or city. It also involves the prejudices they hold. I do not mean by this racial prejudices though this would be included, but rather what

things they have concluded over the years about which they no longer ponder but simply pre-judge or conclude without deliberate thought. Education is a determining factor in what we think and whether we are male or female strongly influences how we perceive the world.

I have been asked to tell you how I think Scripture and the social sciences intersect as they speak to male/female relationships. Sharing my academic credentials only, will not allow you to properly evaluate the opinions I express. You must also know my commitment to Scriptural study and truth over 40+ years. Knowing a bit of my personal history, my academic perspective and my belief that as a “true Lutheran”, when I open the Bible the Holy Spirit speaks to me personally will help you determine whether you will allow me to persuade you that my thinking has validity. It is these factors that give you context for this “I think” paper.

A SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

I gave a presentation for women in 1986 when my 98 year old grandmother was still alive, reminding them of the huge changes that occurred in her almost 100 year lifetime. She was born in 1888 when her ride off the farm she was raised on, was a horse and buggy. She lived to see a woman by the name of Sally Ride go into space in a rocket ship. In the 20 years since she died, we have experienced tremendous technological growth to the extent that there are many who remember when a long distance phone call was a luxury, to most of us carrying instant connection to any place in the world in our pockets.

Even when change is good, however, it can be stressful, especially when it is outside our control. We want stability. Some psychotherapists believe people do not change unless they are in severe pain. This essay will examine change in our social structure and in our social relationships especially as it pertains to males and females, and then how we as Christians have related to these changes.

When Grandma Doris married, she was 22. Grandpa Henry was 25.¹ When they married in 1909, the divorce rate was 1 per 1,000. They expected to stay married for their lifetime and they did, though she lived for 24 years as a widow. Women and men married for physical and economic survival. It was the only approved avenue for a sexual relationship and the birth of children. Women were expected to be in charge of the household and this might have included finding a way to bring some cash or “egg money” into the household. However, only about 20 % of women worked outside the home. We were largely an agricultural society. Some women worked in the fields at planting or harvest time and then went in to kill, pluck and fry chickens and prepare food raised in their gardens for an evening dinner for their families. At harvest time or large gatherings the men were served first. Then the women and children sat down to eat afterward. Men were expected to do the backbreaking hard labor, be in charge of the wife, and if necessary, discipline children – with physical punishment when needed.

Raising children was woman’s work. My grandparents had five children.² Most men did not have hands on practice with infants or young children. However, children were expected at a young age to work and in most households, the boys would work alongside their father and the girls would work to help their mother. Society had a strong influence on the structure of the

¹ The national average at marriage in 1900 for men was 25.9; for women 22. It declined between 1910 and 1960, but since 1970 has increased for both men and women. Presently the average for men is 27.1 and for women 25.8.

² The early 20th century average number of children was 3.5.

family. Husbands and wives functioned in what is called traditional roles defined as highly structured roles with specific functions.³ They had one voice – his. Society and Christian teaching supported the other.

My parents were married in 1939. The divorce rate was 2 per thousand marriages. My mother was 17 and my dad was 25. They expected to be married for their lifetime. They were married until my Dad died in 1981. My mother lived as a widow for 20 years. I don't know anything about the emotional content of my grandparent's marriage. However, as a child I saw my mother struggle with this traditional structure of marriage in which there are different privileges for men. There were six children.

When my parents moved off the farm in Minnesota and then to a small city in Illinois outside of Chicago in 1950, my mother worked outside the home at whatever she could to help financially. In the 1940's and 1950's about 34% of married women worked outside the home. At the time she had five children (one more would come 7 years later) and a husband to do laundry and cook and for whom to keep house. Supper was on the table when my Dad got home because I as oldest daughter finished preparing what she started before she went off to her night shift waitress job.

About ten years ago, I heard a radio preacher insisting that society would be saved only if we returned to the traditional family. He went so far as to say that this type of family was what God intended. What he spoke of was husband as breadwinner and head of the household coming home for dinner at six. Mother was at home with no outside job having supper on the table for him and the three plus children they surely had. The family attended church together every Sunday.

He was speaking idyllically of the 1950's family. The divorce rate during the 50's had dropped to 2.2 in 1957 after a peak of 4.3 after the end of WWII. Birth rates had steadily risen between 1940 to 1957 and had peaked to 3.7 children per family. Many have attributed this stabilization and family focus to a recession in the 50's after the war. When we hear of "traditional family values", this period is what most people unconsciously register.

My husband and I were married in 1960. I was 20 and he was 22 years old. The divorce rate was 3 per thousand. We expected to stay married for a lifetime. We decided that I would stop teaching when we had children, which I did in 1964 after teaching four years. I had been influenced by TV's "Father Knows Best" and "Ozzie and Harriet" apparently. I wanted an emotionally present husband and father. I also know I thought my mother had been very overworked and it wasn't fair. I expected some help with the children.

When I returned to school part-time as an adult, in-between my responsibilities as wife, mother, and "prof's wife" in the 1970's, the divorce rate had climbed considerably. It was now almost 5 per thousand. There was a new academic discipline evolving during this decade. It was called "Women's Studies."⁴

³ The origin of the "traditional family" roles is attributed to the Industrial Revolution in Europe in 1830 when economy went from home-based to the public sphere. When men moved from the home for wages and women remained in the home to provide for the care of children, the genders were separated in a new way.

⁴ I never actually took courses that were designated as such at UNL, though the first such course began in 1971 and a major and minor was offered by 1976. www.unl.edu/womenssp/about/history.shtml.com. But much of my course work was influenced by this gathering of new information as I pursued studies in sociology, parent/child relationships, psychology, male and female adult development and marital relationships. All my courses reflected thinking that was changing about males and females and the traditional role relationship between men and women.

Jesse Bernard a highly respected sociologist, published a book in 1975 entitled *Women, Wives and Mothers*. In the forward of her book she said,

We are in an unusual position today, for one of the most important series of historical events - the restructuring of sex roles to adapt them to modern life –is unfolding before our very eyes. We are here. We are actually watching it. I view the current restructuring of sex roles as no less [history changing] than the restructuring of the class system which was one of the first consequences of the industrial revolution.

When I read 18th century British tracts . . . that taught **poor** people to recognize their betters, to know their station in life and be content with it, to use their brains to make the most of what they had and not try to get **more**, to accept the fact that societies were rigidly classified and the duties of all laid down, I find it easy to substitute “women” for “the poor” and see the changes in the sex-role structure now beginning to take place, an analogue to the changes in the class structure then beginning to take place.⁵

This thinking resulted out of the social milieu of the 1960's. The two decades of the 60's and 70's and their significance on the roles of men and women is of such importance that an essay of this type cannot do it justice. A new “group” of society had begun to have a certain kind of recognition in the late 1940's and became known as “teenagers”. In the next 10 years they would develop clearly with their own music and style of dress. Many parents of these teenagers more strongly promoted a college education for their sons and some for their daughters as well. And though the common “joke” was that all women wanted from college was their MRS, one of the facts was that mothers with daughters saw an education as insurance for the “what ifs”. If your husband dies, you can work. If your husband divorces you, you will have job skills. If you need to bring in “egg money” you will have some way of doing so.

Some of the angriest women in the 70's were women whose husbands divorced them during what was named as a “mid-life crisis”. These women had no job skills because they had been stay-at-home Moms. And as a result of divorce they had became part of the “new poor” as they tried to support their children alone. The divorce rate was steadily climbing in the 60's and 70's and eventually reached the highest rate in history at 5.3 in 1979 and 1981.

When we remember what had already occurred when Jesse Bernard wrote the forward to her book, we will recall that the birth control pill came onto the market in the early 1960's. Lobbying for the right to abortion was going on already in the mid 60's. The right to abortion was about to be legislated in the Roe vs. Wade Supreme Court decision Jan. 22, 1973. And, of course, there was the Vietnam conflict from the mid 1960's to the mid 1970's along side the Civil Rights Movement, as well as a new proliferation of drugs in our culture.

These teenagers of the late 50's who became the college students of the 60's found a voice for themselves in the college environment. Disillusioned young men and women created a new culture of communes where they felt they belonged and were loved. Why did so many young people who were raised during the “Happy Days” of the 50's feel there had to be a better way? Many insisted marriage was not necessary and now with the pill and abortion it surely was not necessary for sex. Now women could have multiple partners and supposedly not suffer consequences – just like men? Would controlling the number of children give them more freedom?

⁵ Jesse Bernard, *Women, Wives and Mothers; Values and Options*. (Bantam, 1972), 2.

The Playboy Bunny was a part of our 60's culture. This objectification of the female with a tail seemed to be the personification of adolescent male thinking. Hollywood was controlled by men and so we saw male fantasies played out on the screen more and more. Think of the James Bond series of movies. Though supposedly freed from unwanted pregnancy, in the 60's women were still to be what men wanted them to be. It was "traditional" with a new twist.

But there was strong influence for the status-quo as well. Many married men in the late 50's became part of the "corporate world". They were expected to dedicate themselves to work with the expectation of appreciable salaries and benefits. Wives were actually interviewed as their husbands went through the interview process to see if they had the social skills to be a "corporate wife". Many military bases during this time also reflected the idea that a woman's identity was through her husband. She "wore" her husbands rank in social interaction. In both of these institutions, women were partners in working at their husbands' success.

Women a little older and beyond being caught up in either the hippie life style or seduced by the Bunny Tale were seeing things about the institution of marriage that they became convinced needed changing. Men also, who believed that adolescent fantasies were not supposed to come to life, who didn't believe drugs would enlighten them, understood the benefits of marriage for men, and that there were still rules of conduct and decorum between male and female also were looking for better ways to be in relationship.

A new wind had been stirring. Marriage counseling was entering the field of social science. In the 1930's some psychologists recognized that doing therapy with one person only, when in fact they were part of a couple relationship, was not as productive as they hoped. But it was not until the 1950's and 1960's that the need was perceived for a separate profession to treat the marital relationship. In the '70's UNL was particularly involved in researching, understanding, and promoting the concept of healthy family traits. If healthy families were studied to determine what traits they possessed, marriage counselors would have a better understanding of what goals to promote with couples in counseling. My dissertation explored the Marriage Enrichment movement and its effectiveness in making long lasting changes. It was hoped that intentional attention to the marital relationship could stem the rising divorce rate.

Quoting my own dissertation introduction:

The social milieu created in the 1940's, 1950's and 1960's affected the expectations accompanying marriage. Women had been required to work outside the home during war and consequently gained awareness of their ability to be independent. Men traveled greater distances from the suburbs to jobs and spent more hours away from home. Individualism became important as well as individual happiness. Religious ideologies were challenged and along with them, the religious values of lifelong monogamy and fidelity. Divorce became an avenue for many more couples.

Some professionals began to ask a number of questions: (1) If the old social mores could no longer be depended on to keep a marriage intact, then specifically what would enable a couple to live together happily over their extended lifetime? (2) How could both individual needs and societal needs be fulfilled within marriage? (3) How could the new concept of companionate marriages be achieved?

David Mace, a pioneer in the field of marriage counseling, was one therapist who recommended working with couples before their relationship was hopelessly broken.

Already in the 1940's, he envisioned preventive counseling or education to enable couples to avoid destructive behaviors and patterns, and the subsequent disillusionments of married life. It was not until the early 1960's that David and Vera Mace attempted to initiate marital growth groups and began nurturing the ideas that would lead to a wide-scale marriage enrichment movement. Historically, the time was right. Couples were looking for ways to prevent divorce. . . .

By the mid-1960s, the importance of effective communication in the marriage and within the family began to foster attention. Experiential learning was being recognized as conducive to the educational process. The mode of thought called humanism came into view in the mid-1960s which encouraged individuals to seek awareness of self, others, and relationships, and advocated growth and development in all these areas. Theorists furthering the idea of systems gave prominence to the concept that each individual affects the whole. As educators in marriage and family life sought new ways to respond to the question of how to make a good marriage, the necessity to focus upon strengths already inherent in the relationship and the possibility of maximizing their relationship potential was being encouraged as a new approach to helping couples.

As ineffective communication and the lack of other interpersonal skills were recognized as primary difficulties in marriages aiming for the realization of companionate relationships, the skills and systematized programs to teach effective communication were incorporated into the marriage enrichment movement. . . .⁶

Many of these new programs attempting to address the changing roles in society and the concept that marriage was not just an institution to keep society functioning but rather built on the emotion of love between two individuals were being developed by Christian individuals, couples, and denominations. Most certainly it was not just Christians who believed that the dissolution of marriages was having a catastrophic impact on society. But because Christians believe marriage is instituted by God until death do us part and that sexual morality is paramount to our being different and set apart as Christians, the Christian church was in the forefront in speaking out about preventing divorce through the Marriage Enrichment movement.

This period began the great concern for the rebellion against "traditional values". My own reading and study in regard to the 60's generation casting off of values, indicated that in homes where the authoritarian father enforced discipline without engaging their children in discussion at appropriate times resulted in rebellious children. In families where the values were actually verbalized and discussed, there was much less disregard for these values. Children no longer had an economic value to the family so they lacked awareness of their worth. These children hungered to be told they were loved and appreciated for who they were. As this generation had more opportunity for education than their parents, no longer were they willing to accept ideas and values because it "had always been that way" or "because I said so".

In the 1970's, women in academia began to review the literature regarding women. Research on health issues done up to this time, it was revealed, were done almost exclusively with men. Women's hormonal cycles were considered to complicate scientific studies too much.

⁶ Barbara Brunworth, Unpublished dissertation, *The Efficacy of A Marriage Enrichment Weekend Only vs. A Marriage Enrichment Plus Follow-Up Support*, (UNL, 1982), 2-4.

Never the less, male physicians told women what to believe about themselves based on what they knew about men and from their own male perspective.

Explanations of sexuality emanated from a male perspective. Women were considered frigid sexually if they were not orgasmic from the “missionary position” i.e. man above, woman below intercourse. In psychological studies, women were said to be less emotionally stable than men. It was considered debatable whether women were as intelligent as men.

Parenting books were written for women by men who had never raised their own children. Men were telling women how to do the very thing that had always been considered “women’s work”. And there was no small amount of criticism. A child psychologist by the name of Donald Winnicott M.D. finally declared that not everything could be blamed on mothers. There were, in fact, even in our imperfect families, “good enough” mothers, he said.

Moral development was mainly studied with male subjects but this was not common knowledge. Women were measured against a developmental model designed through the study of men, and women were found to be wanting. Freud, Erickson, Piaget, and Kohlberg concluded that women were morally inferior to men.

As a result of this sociological view that women were “less than”, a great effort was put into arguing and proving at the academic level that women were the same as men. Why the same? Because this was seen as the basis to be considered *equal* to men.

In 1976 when I began my doctoral studies in Marriage and Family Counseling, I was told I would likely be seeing more women than men in counseling. Women were considered the “pain bearer” of the family, therefore, women would come to counselors with their issues and the problems of the relationship. Counseling would not be something men would want to do. This actually never proved true. From the beginning of my practice in 1979 men came alone to counseling seeking help with relationships, the difficulties of work situations, life stage issues, as well as with their wives for marriage counseling.

As equality for women was being fought for through seeing ourselves as the same, and women were being trained to be more assertive and to be more instrumental in the ‘70’s, men were encouraged to be more aware of their feelings. It was theorized that men and women were not as inherently different as society had promoted and that the way we respond psychologically, socially, and intellectually depends upon the way we are expected to be by the very society in which we are raised.

Would men be more expressive if only they learned to attend to their feelings? Could they be more nurturing if society did not frown upon men changing diapers? Would women be more mathematically and scientifically inclined hence more logical if they were encouraged to be so?

Women had heard all their lives that many men would not marry if society and women did not insist on it. And so studies were done comparing the happiness of single men, single women, married men, and married women. These studies said that married men were the happiest, single women were next, then married women and least happy were the single men.

This begged the question, was marriage a good thing for men but not women? And why was it not good for women? When no fault divorce was legislated in many states in the 1970’s, it was feared that irresponsible men would welcome this freedom to leave wives and children for independence or another woman. From 1910 on, there have been more divorced females than males. Males remarry more quickly and in greater number. This is also true after a death. But why did many women seek divorce? The simple answer to this is that the traditional marriage was not a happy place for many women. Marriages were no longer being entered into by women

because it was the only way to survive physically and economically. Being divorced did not have as great a stigma. When marriage became too unbearable in the mind of the woman, many began to leave. It is said that when a woman gives up on the relationship, the marriage is over.

In the mean time, society and the church at large was reacting with confusion and concern to the changing roles, the perceived breakdown in morality, the divorce rate, and this female critique of their lives as women. The word feminist became a dirty word in social conversation and in the church. Often angry feminists were the perceived cause of the breakdown of the family.

It is true that a reaction of some women to “finding themselves” beyond being a wife and mother was to leave husbands and children. But it was so much deeper than this. Feminist or not, there was much to be angry about. The 1980’s and 1990’s were the decades of “baring it all”. Perhaps it most obviously began with the first tabloid talk show, the Phil Donahue TV program which began in 1970. Topics never before talked about in polite society were discussed openly on TV. There was much that was positive about this in the 70’s. The public was being educated about women’s wages, working conditions, benefits, pensions, child care, and the lack of legal rights and protection.

A “spare the rod and spoil the child” philosophy of child rearing was strongly ingrained in American families. The 70’s was the time when this younger generation began to reveal family secrets of abuse. Sadly, there was much more abuse of women and children by men than anyone wanted to believe. In 1971 the first abuse hotline for women was established in this country.

Do you know that the most dangerous place for a woman is the home? During a six year period between 1967 and 1973, battering men killed 17,500 women and children in the United States. The 1991 FBI Uniform Crime Reports said “Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women between ages 15 and 44 in the United States – more than car accidents, muggings, and rapes combined.”⁷

Some women, even today, don’t know how to define abuse. They have accepted being hit, psychologically intimidated, controlled by not being allowed to have any of their own money, and being raped by their own husbands as “normal”. And if they knew it was not normal they had no way of combating it. They had no place to go. For many, even their own families told them to go back to their husbands. Too many clergy supported the status quo and told women to accept their husbands because he was the head of the house and they were to be submissive to him. The Women’s Movement spoke out strongly against women accepting abuse in a marital relationship and of the woman’s responsibility to protect their children from abuse.

Research done to help determine what factors were actually present in healthy, functioning families revealed that first and foremost the individual members were respected, their perspective was considered valid and between husband and wife equal weight was attributed to input. Each was presumed to have the right to try and persuade as to be persuaded in conflict situations. The idea of one voice was no longer accepted by many couples. Parents who operated their family from an *authoritative* perspective rather than *authoritarian* or *laze-faire* were raising better functioning children.

As stated, in 1979 and 1981, the divorce rate reached its highest rate in history at 5.3 per thousand. During this time, Dr. David Olson designed a premarital program called PREPARE, to help couples planning to marry enter more realistically and with better relationship skills into matrimony. His inventory, distributed in 1980, was built on the concept of companionate

⁷ Andrea Lissette, and Richard Krause. *Free Yourself From An Abusive Relationship*, (Hunter House.,2000), p.xi.

marriage. When he was doing research in preparation for the design, he found that of the couples being studied, there were four clusters of couples who showed certain traits in their relationship. For the sake of the inventory, these clusters were given names. He named couples who had the highest degree of agreement on all 10 issues⁸ believed to be significant strength factors of marriage, Vitalized Couples. His next group is called Harmonious Couples. The third group was called Traditional Couples and the fourth was Conflicted Couples. When he developed ENRICH for couples already married, he added a fifth group called Devitalized Couples.

He found that the group he called Traditional Couples were only moderate in their couple satisfaction whereas the Vitalized and Harmonious Couples had high couple satisfaction. The Traditional Couples were high on Children and Parenting issues and on their Spiritual Belief. They were lower than Vitalized and Harmonious couples on agreement in Personality Issues, Communication, and Conflict Resolution. And they were lower on assertiveness, self confidence, couple closeness and couple flexibility. They tended to avoid expressing their wants in the relationship and they reported that one member of the couple tried to dominate.

This inventory is well known among clergy. It has been promoted and used widely in churches and by the clergy with couples preparing for marriage and now with married couples to promote marital health. Though the inventory is not intended to be predictive of marital success, it has been found to have an 80 – 85% accuracy of prediction.

A follow-up study after three years of marriage done by Olson and cohorts reported that traditional couples do have the lowest rate of separation or divorce at 16%, vitalized couples were next with 17%, the harmonious type was third at 25%, and 53% of conflicted couples separated or were divorced within the three years.

However, the *traditional couples reported* the highest percentage of *less happy marriages*. Only 34% said they were happily married. The researchers theorized that traditional couples may place a higher value on marriage stability than on marital satisfaction. Of the *vitalized couples*, 60% said they were happily married. 46% of the *harmonious couples reported being happily married*. The *traditional couples* also reported *more abuse in the relationship* (21% of the couples), than Harmonious (11%) and Vitalized (5%).

As previously stated, in academia through the review of the literature, there was a realization by female researchers that there was an implicit acceptance by female and male writers that the only model of a seemingly full-fledged person was the male. Carol Gilligan's book, *In A Different Voice* offered research on women's development and psychological theory.

She depended on the interview technique which allowed the differences between male and female language to surface. She focused on some issues that she believed diminished women previously in developmental psychology. One of these issues was the conclusion that females suffered from success anxiety. Her conclusion was that females suffer this anxiety only when achievement was directly competitive i.e. at the expense of another. Boys are more concerned about the rules of the game, girls more with relationships often at the expense of the game itself, she said.⁹

She also concluded that women's judgments emanate from an ethic of care and responsibility for one another and a perception of the need for response. A man's judgment

⁸ Inventories focus on significant issues for couples: Personality Issues, Communication, Conflict Resolution, Financial Management, Leisure activities, Sexual Relationship, Children and Parenting, Family and friends, Role Relationship, and Spiritual Beliefs.

⁹ Carol Gilligan, *In A Different Voice*, (Harvard University Press, 1982), 14-17.

reflects the logic of the justice approach. She concluded that males and females have different modes of moral understanding, different ways of thinking about conflict and choice. Males think from a hierarchy of power, females from a hierarchy of values, but she sees this as complementary rather than sequential or opposed. She believes we need to ask “What does he see that she does not? What does she see that he does not?”¹⁰

She spoke also of the concept of individuation and how one becomes a separate identity. The interviews reflected the prevalence of violence in male fantasy which she said “seems to arise from a problem in communication and an absence of knowledge about human relationships”. Women’s fantasies create nets of safety, locating the problem in the isolation of self and in the hierachal construction of human relationships¹¹. In her concluding thoughts, she said, “. . . in the adolescent years, male and female voices typically speak of the importance of different truths, the former of the role of separation as it defines and empowers the self, the latter of the ongoing process of attachment that creates and sustains the human community”. And further “. . . the fusion of identity and intimacy is noted repeatedly in women’s development . . . the sequential ordering of identity and intimacy . . . better fits development of men than women”¹².

During the decade of the 80’s, women and men in academia were no longer satisfied with the concept of sameness. With women as research subjects, differences were being noted and along with it a demand that these differences be treated with new respect. Women *are* different it was said, but this difference does not make women “less than”. But this deeply ingrained belief has been difficult to erase from our psyches’. When boys and girls were asked to imagine themselves as the gender of the other and asked what they would be, girls vistas expanded greatly. Boys refused even to consider being a girl. This was the decade then that focused on self-esteem issues most particularly in regard to females.

This decade also spawned superwomen i.e. women who came to believe they could have it all, all at the same time. They came to expect that they should use their education and continue to work outside the home with all the demands put upon men in the workplace, be in relationship as a wife and bear and care for children. It also produced more men amenable to “helping in the kitchen”. But the expectations of women to have a household *partner* since they were working outside the home, exceeded the desires of many men to put into practice this companionate marriage ideal. Women still did the majority of household tasks and childcare. This resulted in frustration and anger in women and in a major area of conflict in marriage. It also resulted in women working part-time or quitting their jobs for motherhood even at the expense of their career later when they were ready to go back to work. However, this option was not open to all women. Many households were now built on the two-income expectation.

The ’90’s produced a splay of books for the lay public on the differences between males and females. *You Just Don’t Understand – Women and Men in Conversation* went so far as to say that the conversation between women and men is cross-cultural communication.¹³ *Genderflex – Men & Women Speaking Each Other’s Language at Work* said that “if men and women were going to be more effective in understanding each other, influencing each other and working together, then each sex needs to become more skilled in changing its natural

¹⁰ Ibid., 30-33.

¹¹ Ibid., 45.

¹² Ibid., 156-163.

¹³ Deborah Tannen, *You Just Don’t Understand – Women and Men in Conversation*, (New York: Ballantine Books, 1990), 17-18, 42- 47, 169-170, 209,268-269,282-283.

communication pattern and adapting to the other gender.”¹⁴ These books demonstrating that the life experience of women and men is so significantly different that we have great difficulty understanding one another, received widespread publicity. The book that probably received the most publicity, however, is *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*. Many therapists were irritated by the popularity of this book even though John Gray was a counselor himself. Many were afraid it would be regressive and reinforce stereotypes about women and men that counselors had fought hard to erase as excuses for conflicts or misunderstandings in male/female relationships. Jessie Bernard had written similarly in *The Future of Marriage* in 1972, but it had become politically incorrect to speak openly about these differences. Gray had gathered the current research findings on differences and gave males and females a way to talk about their differences.

The ‘80’s and ‘90’s also brought exciting new technology into use. Imaging tools such as the CT scanning, three dimensional X-ray, PET, MRI, and EEG’s could be used to see the active brain. Quickly the question of gender differences entered the field of neuropsychology and psychiatry. As different areas of the brain were mapped and understood for function we now wanted to know if there is an explanation that could be seen for the differences noted from research on gender strengths and weaknesses.

A most recent publication for the public is a book by a neuropsychiatrist, called simply, *The Female Brain*. What makes her book interesting is that she has tackled the elephant in the research room i.e. the issue of hormonal differences in males and females and how those hormones affect the development and function of the brain. It’s been an elephant because originally, as stated, men thought women were not good subjects for research because their menstrual cycle complicated the findings. It’s been an elephant because of the possibility of reverting to old derogatory stereotypes that declared that a woman wasn’t fit for a variety of male held positions because she was thought to be ruled by hormones. It was an elephant because a woman’s intellect, logic and judgment have been questioned because hormones make a woman “too emotional”.

Though she says she must leave the writing of a book on the male brain to another, in the contrasts that she notes we get some of the current findings on the male brain as well. An excerpt from Chapter one is in the book jacket.

It’s not as if we all start out with the same brain structure. They are different by nature. Think about this. What if the communication center is bigger in one brain than the other? What if the emotional memory center is bigger in one brain than the other? What if one brain develops a greater ability to read cues in people than another? In this case, you would have a person whose reality dictated that communication, connection, emotional sensitivity, and responsiveness were the primary values. This person would prize these qualities above all others and be baffled by another person with a brain that didn’t grasp the importance of these qualities. In essence, you would have someone with a female brain.¹⁵

¹⁴ Judith C. Tingley, *Genderflex: Men & Women Speaking Each Other’s Language at Work*, (New York: Amacom, 1994), 13.

¹⁵ Louann Brizendine. *The Female Brain*. (New York: Morgan Road Books, 2006). 1-9.

Two other c2006 books that collate research are *Teenage Guys* and *Teenage Girls*. They include current neuropsychological and psychiatry information that helps to explain how testosterone and estrogen affect the developing brain.¹⁶

Early on when this research on differences was being done a caution was issued that is emphasized even more as the role of hormones is realized. There may be as much or more difference *among* males and *among* females as *between* males and females due to the level of testosterone and estrogen in each individual. Both estrogen and testosterone are present in each individual.

INTERSECTION

In the 1970's, I don't need to remind anyone that there was a great deal of turmoil in LCMS. Name calling and labeling permeated Synod. Scriptural inerrancy, Secular Humanism, Feminism, and the Historical Critical Method were anathema. There was much hurt experienced in the professional community of LCMS and confusion among laity about what the professionals were really fighting about. Concordia, Seward was determined to stay out of the foray, not allow the faculty to be divided and go about the business of educating students. This worked some of the time. But each of us in our own way struggled and/or was affected by the war. And I believe it is fair to say that we still wrestle with the repercussions of that time.

On my shelves among the myriad books and articles on the topic of male/female relationship from a Christian perspective is a copy of *The Springfielder*, the March 1970 edition, which was devoted entirely to the issue of women's ordination and women's service in the church. It became a major concern for LCMS because the Lutheran Church in America was to vote on the question of the ordination of women as pastors in its June convention.

I don't remember specifically why or even for sure who brought the journal to my attention. Surely it was because they knew by discussions I had joined in that I was interested in the topic. It was shared with me a few years after publication. As I pulled it from my shelf in preparation to refresh my memory on various things, I remembered more the feelings I had when I read it than I remembered the articles themselves. I do remember a few of the female professors commenting about a man by the name of Fritz Zerbst. His thesis on the order of

¹⁶ Steve Gerali, *Teenage Guys*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 170-173. Ginny Olson, *Teenage Girls*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 2006, 150-151. They are written from a Christian perspective for use by those parenting or working with teens and are an excellent resource in understanding the latest information in brain research and gender differences. Points I think would be helpful to note and have not yet been touched upon are:

"There are developmental differences between males and females but it has no bearing on the individual's intellectual capacity. Certain brain functions will come more easily for boys and vice versa. When a male is engaged in active-listening he activates one hemisphere of the brain. When a female is so engaged, the neurons in both hemispheres are triggered. It is believed this is why it is easier for a female to interpret language and facial expressions and express verbally. "A guy's brain is programmed to analyze; a girl's to process. . . . As a guy's brain is developing, he may need to be coached on how to see things from another person's perspective." *Teenage Guys*

"In Jr. High, many girls begin to fade academically apparently in part due to some academic settings which are large and impersonal and in part because girls shift from a focus on achievement to a focus on affiliation. Some adolescent girls learn to sacrifice their development for the sake of popularity and likeability. They take on a position of powerlessness or what researcher Martin Seligman calls "learned helplessness". Olson says, "If a culture affirms helplessness in a female, it's often easier for her to conform than to push back against the pressure and take risks". *Teenage Girls*

creation, it was said, emanated more from Calvinistic theology and was brought into LCMS in 1954.¹⁷ *The Springfielder* referenced him in one of the articles.¹⁸

Another feeling I recall as I reread the articles was one of immutability in saying that the answer was in the order of creation and this would not be changed by discussion. I was offended by some of the articles. It was that feeling of being “less than”, that was being addressed in academia that was very present in some of these articles.¹⁹

As my academic studies and Bible Study continued simultaneously, I found myself struggling with *cognitive dissonance*. It is said that most people cannot remain with cognitive dissonance for long. Eventually we will choose one avenue of thought because both our feelings and our behavior emanate from the way we think. I was determined that Scripture would remain pre-determinate in my understanding of human psychology and behavior. This made sense to

¹⁷ Mary Todd. *Authority Vested*, (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000). 154-159 gives the history of the Zerbst perspective entering LCMS.

¹⁸ James Weis. “The Status of Women in The Missouri Synod in The Twentieth Century”, 38-43.

¹⁹ Martin J. Naumann “Natural Orders” *The Springfielder*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 33, March 1970), 4-9. When I reread this article I knew why I had such strong visceral memory. Naumann gives voice to his belief that “once we occupy our minds with the story of creation as revealed to us in Genesis, we there discover the place of man before God and in the world.” His article is sometimes confusing as to when he uses the word “man” to mean all mankind which would include women and when “man” means “male”. Trying to give him every benefit of understanding on my part, let me quote a few selected concepts from the article. He spoke of the fact that God created man as a social being so God gave him a helpmate thus establishing the order of matrimony as a source of coming human life and existence. “Now Adam is placed into an order of relation to another person”. He suggests that part of the image of God is being given an object of love i.e. now Adam can love as God loves. Then he said, “To the order of life is added the order of love, and to the order of love is added the order of service. . .

“Now within this order our attention is called to what might be considered station or rank. The New Testament constantly points to the Genesis record. Adam, who was first made and given dominion, which of course Eve was to share, since she too is created in the image of God, is told, after the fall, that his mistake was to listen to the voice of the woman. Because he thus relinquished his leadership he is to find that he can no more rule in the way he did before the fall. The sin of both is disobedience, but Paul calls attention to the fact that the attending circumstances of the fall point to Eve as the “adjudix Satanae,” the agent of Satan. Eve usurped first the Lordship of God by taking matters into her own hands, the second step was almost a natural consequence, she now also entices Adam to be obedient to her or Satan.

“There is in the word addressed to her by God that “poetic” justice that woman shall forever be drawn to man desiring a companion and shall ever be disappointed in finding a ruler or master over her. The history of mankind, not to say of marriage, has shown the truth of this word. Ever since that time Eve’s position is one she cannot escape because she still is woman.”

Further on he says, “What is the dignity and honor of women according to God’s original creation? To be wife and mother. This is true from a simple biological, social, practical point of view. The great honor and dignity of man is to be what God wants him to be. God created Eve to be wife and a mother of all living. Where Eve forgets the role, she loses her crowning glory and must be ashamed of what she has become. Adam the same. Where the man does not know for what purpose he lives, he knows nothing of his dignity and honor. . .”

I found then and I still find this rendering of the “order of creation” as a theological foundation for the relationship between men and women to be offensive. I also find it to be a distinctly male rendition of the creation account and fall. Besides the fact that he considers God’s word to Eve to be “poetic justice”, woman has no purpose except as a helpmate to man, as a wife and mother. What about the many single women in today’s culture? Are they to be ashamed? What about the women who live 25 years as a widow beyond their child raising years? What about women who will work outside the home their whole lives except for 6 weeks maternity leave for each child? What is God’s purpose for her as an individual?

Now, lest you believe I am offended by a discussion of the “order of creation” in itself, or an article written on the subject by a man, let me say that the next article “Twenty-Three Theses on the Holy Scriptures, The Woman, and The Office of The Ministry” was written by Bo Giertz, Bishop of Goteborg Church of Sweden. Included in his defense of ordination for males only from a Scriptural perspective, he includes the “order of creation” as one of his theses. I did not find his article in the least offensive. Though written by a male, I was not offended by his perspective. I found it helpful and challenging.

me because God is our creator and knows us completely. I have said often in presentations that the Bible is the best psychology test we have. There are Christian psychologists who do not abide this fusion but I continually feel affirmed in this belief. As a result I could not and did not just disregard the difficult passages of I Tim. 2: 8-15, I Cor. 14: 34-36 and Eph. 5:21-33.

The book of Ephesians is my favorite book of the Bible. On a particular day in the mid 1970's in Seward, I was particularly frustrated. I was reading the second chapter from a new version of the Bible at the time, the Good News Translation. After those verses I consider the most Lutheran of verses, "By grace you are saved . . ." I went on to verse ten. The significance of those words jumped out at me, "God has made us what we are, and in our union with Christ Jesus he has created us for a life of good deeds, which he has already prepared for us to do".

The Ephesians 2:10 verse has been foundational in my understanding of myself as a Christian woman ever since. It is a verse I use over and over as I teach and work with Christian women. God has made us what we are. I am female. More than any other factor, my gender influences my experiences. God has created me with a particular kind of personality and gifted me with abilities. In union with Christ Jesus, God has things planned for me to do.

In my frustration over the conflicted messages I believed "the church" was giving to me and other women as a female about what I could and could not do with the gifts God had given to me and other women within the confines of the church, I continued to ask the Holy Spirit to guide me. I have said, "When I am called to my heavenly home and stand before God to account for the use of the opportunities, abilities, and gifts He gave me, if I say, 'Yes – but - Lord, the men wouldn't let me,' I expect He will say, 'And to whom were you accountable?'"

In the late 70's as I was wrestling to integrate what I was learning at the university and what I felt as a Christian woman with what I interpreted "the church" to be saying, I expressed this frustration to a relative by marriage who is an LCMS educator and clergyman. I told him it seemed to me that even St. Paul could only speak to his cohorts or congregants with veiled understanding of what God really *intended* for mankind before we fell into sin and that only God knew how the words He gave to Paul were intended for the future. It seemed to me that we had to keep asking ourselves how Scripture speaks to us about what God intends for us currently. Paul tells us in Romans 12:2 that we are not to conform to the world, but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, so that we can discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Because of this, I told him, I continue to go back to the Genesis account of creation to try and understand God's intent for us as male and female. He got out his notes from seminary days on Genesis and said, "Let me show you something." He proceeded to explain that in Gen. 1:26 the Hebrew says, "Let us make *humans* in our image. . . . *male* and *female*, he created them." Then in Gen. 2: 5 through 22 the word is always *human*; even when it says a rib is taken, it is from the *human*, which he made into a *woman/wife/individual* (not the word for female) and brought her to - again it is, the *human*. Only in v 23 is the sex of the first mentioned saying, ". . . then the *man/husband/individual* (not the word for male) said, "This is bone of my bone . . . shall be called *woman/wife/individual* because she was taken out of *man/husband/individual*. Again here, it is not the specific word for male or female that is used, but rather the word which implies relationship.

This was very significant for me. It said to me, there is no *male* without *female*. Think about it. The word male or female has no meaning without the other. It is only for the sake of relationship or complementarity that God created them male and female. To me the specific Hebrew words used said it does not matter whether the first human was male.

In the years since, I have been going back to the reference Paul makes to women keeping silent in I Cor. 14: 34-36 and in I Tim. 2: 8-15 in which he says I do not permit women to teach or have authority over men. Teaching or having authority has meant different things over the years in LCMS. In the 1938 Synodical Convention an official question about woman suffrage came before the convention. It was referred to a committee. Fifteen years later a resolution was made that a committee be appointed to an exegetical study of these passages and all other applicable texts as they relate to the question of women suffrage in our congregations. In 1962 The Commission on Theology and Church Relations was established in response to a request from the 1962 Convention to provide reports/documents for study on a variety of theological issues.

In 1963, 1967, and 1969 resolutions again were made to study the subject further (now it was more than women's suffrage) and to provide guidance with the understanding that the congregations had liberty as long as women neither hold the pastoral office nor 'exercise authority over men.' The 1971 Convention had two resolutions. One was "To withhold Ordination of Women to the Pastoral Office" the other "To Study the Role of Women."

In 1973 there was a resolution to establish a Task Force to study the role of women. There were women on this Task Force. In 1975 there was a resolution "To Utilize Women's Gifts". In 1977 there were again two resolutions which were in reality oppositional in intent, one "To Reaffirm the Synod's Position on Women's Role in the Church" and another "To Command the Task Force on Women and Continue to Study Role of Women in the Church". In 1981 a resolution was made "To Urge Completion of Study on Women's Role in the Church".

Society was changing and the conventions' resolutions reflected this. There was concern we might change in reaction to women's greater participation in society and concern that we were not reflecting the positive changes that had come about with men and women's changing roles. And so it has gone for 15 more years. To the best of my knowledge eight study documents have been published by the CTCR on the issue of women's service in the church. Four of them resulted in minority or dissenting opinions.

Cognitive dissonance is powerful in its demand to come to a conclusion and relieve the discomfort. But I will not just discard the difficult verses. I trust that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man (woman) of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work," which Paul says to Timothy in his second letter (3:16-17).

These passages we insist as truth for all time are nestled within other comments and instructions that we no longer consider to be "law" for the Christians. As women, we braid our hair and wear pearls which Paul speaks against two sentences previously when writing to Timothy.

Most of Chapter 14 is dedicated to speaking in tongues with these few words about women being silent immediately following the statement that "God is a God not of disorder but of peace" (v 32). Chapter 11 speaks of Christ as head of man, man is head of woman, and God is head of Christ. But what does this mean? We believe in the Triune God. They are co-equal we profess. And in this chapter it speaks of women prophesying.

There are numerous accounts of women as prophets. When one studies the role of prophet in the Old and New Testament serious question can arise about the stance that LCMS holds in that the function of prophet is now held in the office of the ministry, but, insist that women are not meant for this office.

Is Paul the misogynist that some female theologians in the 80' and 90's accused him of being? It did not fit the Paul I know. Paul went to the gathering place of the women getting water to meet women and be invited to their homes so that he might make and build relationships in order to spread the Gospel. He depended on women of means to support his ministry. As he speaks of men laboring for Christ with him so Paul speaks of women as co-workers; Priscilla, Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis, Euodia and Syntyche are named. For Phoebe, a deacon, Paul asks those at Rome to help her in whatever she may require from you. There is Junia who along with Andronicus, likely her husband, who are called prominent among the apostles and some say may well have been considered apostles. Paul tells the Thessalonians to "Respect those who labor among you, and stand before you in the Lord and admonish you; esteem them very highly in love because of their work" (I Thess. 5:12-13). Paul says in Corinthians (16:15-16) "Submit to" (NIV) or "Put yourselves at the service of" (NRSV) "everyone who joins in the work and labors at it". This would include men submitting to women in our life in the Lord.

Sadly, rarely do LCMS women hear of these New Testament women. It might be understandable that female readers themselves do not realize some of these names are feminine because they don't read Greek. But shouldn't the men who went to seminary know this? Why have LCMS women tended to hear only of women from the Bible that fit the preconceived notions of wives and womanhood like Sarah submitting to Abraham, the perspective that Bathsheba led David into sin, Dorcas' great caring service to others, Hannah's desperation to be a mother, or the poor widow giving her mite? We've had only hints about how important it is for women to sit at the feet of Jesus through the sermons about Mary and Martha or telling the good news of the resurrection by reminding us that it was the women at the empty tomb who ran to tell others.²⁰

Why has it taken females studying Greek and theology to note the significance of women mentioned out of type? Sadder still, I have heard time and again, the contributions of these women and the women of the Old Testament devalued. Miriam is clearly a prophet and called along with her brothers to be leader of the Israelite people. But I was told by a clergyman that the fact she disobeyed and was stricken with leprosy clearly indicates she was punished for her role as leader. Deborah was clearly a judge as were the male judges. Yet I have read that these women were the *exception* to God's intent for women for some specific reason that God had in mind. There is hostile sexism and there is benevolent sexism. Both have been exhibited in LCMS.²¹

²⁰ I'm sure this is an overgeneralization. However, as co-founder of "Women In Union With Christ Jesus" seminars held for the last 11 years in the Dallas-Ft. Worth area, it is safe to say that every year when we include information about the more obscure names, women will tell us they are surprised they have never heard of them before.

²¹ I was invited to be a speaker at the 1997 Great commission Convocation. My presentation was titled, "Women-God's Gift to the Church". I chose the title with full awareness of the double-entendre. My main points were: The church of the 21st century is in danger of losing the unique abilities and perspective of women to spread the Gospel because of the multiplicity of women's roles. . . . Women are the communicators in the family. When they have no time for Bible study. . . . the moral development of their families suffer. . . . Women want men included in classes to encourage their husbands to share in the responsibilities of the home and child raising with them. . . . Single and married women need the encouragement and opportunities to use wisely their abilities of leadership in the church. . . . for a time such as this. . . .

After arriving home from the conference, a letter came from an LCMS pastor. His words were scorching. How dare I suggest that the Christian home will benefit from men doing more housework. As far as I could determine, he had not attended my presentation. Perhaps his wife had. The letter was so hostile, my husband became inflamed by his put-down of me. He wrote a letter to the man in my defense. Though I would not have

In 1991 the LCMS Parish Services Newsletter reported on a research project by Search Institute, a firm that does research on various concerns identified by church denominations. 11,000 individuals from six denominations were studied on two key constructs. One was “faith maturity” which was defined as a vibrant, life-changing faith. . . that shapes one’s way of being, thinking and acting”. Two of the 18 major conclusions are that only a minority of Protestant adults evidence faith maturity and that in every age group from the 30s on, women exhibit greater faith maturity than men.

How does this speak to the men and women of the church? Can males be the only spiritual leaders when so many do not continue to grow in their faith? If women are so busy because a woman’s work is never done and are not studying Scripture, can the 1991 Search Institute findings continue to be true? A 2006 study by The Barna Research Group²² says it is still true that more women read their Bible during the week than men, are more likely to attend church and Sunday School, pray more often, believe that the Bible is accurate and say their faith is very important to them, but there are fewer women doing so.

The church has been criticized for not changing in the light of social changes on the one hand and when it does change, for not being Scripturally steadfast. But let us not shrink before this criticism. The church cannot and must not ignore the changes that have occurred in the last four generations. I believe we must continue to study and discuss the meaning and intent of Scripture for males and females but not just from a male perspective. Fear makes us reactive. If we can lay aside this fear we might find, not that Scripture was wrong and society is right, but that we were incorrect or incapable of understanding what God has been saying to us. Our society has changed. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. We are not. We should not be – we may be resisting God’s direction for the church at this time in our history. We might miss what God has for us to do at this time in the history of the church.

The secular world has been seeking answers to the threats to our society by the changes that have occurred through broken families and its consequences on children, single mothers raising children at the poverty level, physically or emotionally absent fathers, violence in the home, men and women unwilling to treat sexuality with respect, the many addictions, especially now to pornography, and the rising aggression by females to name just a few.

In 1985 when my first daughter married, the rate of divorce had begun decline from its peak of 5.3 to 5.0. It has continued to decline so that in 2005 it was 3.6. This may seem like good news, however, two other factors affect this statistic. The current trend of the marriage age population marrying at least once has gone from a high of 95 out of every 100 to 87 out of every 100. And the U.S. Census Bureau reports 5.5 million unmarried couples were living together in 2000, an increase of 2.3 million couples from the 1990 census.

The Barna Research Group reports that born-again²³ Christians cohabit less (25%) vs. 37% of nominal Christians, 42% of adults from other religious groups and 51% of atheists. Men were more likely to cohabit (39%) than women (28%). However, overall, born-again Christians

responded at all because I knew there was nothing that Pastor was willing to hear from me, my husband gave me a wonderful gift of his maleness. He acted as my protector and defender.

²² The Barna Research Group like the Search Institute does research on issues that affect the Christian church, most particularly the Evangelical community. Their reports can be accessed at www.barna.org. This one is titled “Women Are the Backbone of the Christian Congregations in America” March 2000.

²³ The Barna Research Group, “Born Again Adults Less Likely to Co-habit, Just as Likely to Divorce”, August 12, 2006. Barna defines born again as the individuals who stated a personal commitment to Christ, having confessed their sins, embracing Christ as their Savior, and believing that they have received eternal salvation because of their faith in Christ alone.

were as likely to divorce (33%) as nominal Christians (34%). Barna was sharply criticized because his findings indicated that conservative Protestants have a higher rate of divorce than mainline Christians. Lutherans and Catholics looked pretty good as there was a 21% rate of divorce for each, whereas, non-denominational groups had a rate of 34%, Baptists 29%, and Mainline Protestants had 25% rate of divorce.²⁴

The church should not shrink from “showing us our sin” but why is the church not proactively finding ways to speak to these male/female issues from more than a law oriented Scriptural perspective? As seems to be indicated from the Barna study, law does not work. It never has by itself.

The natural (sinful) male is observed in studies to operate more aggressively from childhood; to be rule oriented and hierarchically minded; often does not develop language for emotions and therefore ignores them; and seeks independence, possibly in the extreme, in the maturation process. The natural (sinful) female is language oriented from birth and verbally preeminent in the home, though usually not in a public setting; finds identity in relationship though often in unhealthy ways; constantly seeks to resolve issues through communication to preserve relationship even to her detriment; and may have to work consciously not to allow emotions to rule the cognitive rational mind.

The Genesis account is an example of what the secular psychologist sees. We were created for relationship. One of the humans was tempted by power – wanted to be like God and so now we see our differences rather than our oneness (we see one another naked) We are forever caught in asking ourselves which gender does God love best? Which one of us is first? We are forever repeating the same sin of blaming the other for being different than we are.

St. Paul said “in our life in the Lord, man is not independent of woman nor woman of man” (I Cor. 11:11). Did Paul speak to women about submission and to men about love because a deeper meaning was revealed to him by God 2000 years before a secular psychologist by the name of William Glasser made an observation? Glasser said that contrary to Maslow’s hierarchy of needs that there are only two basic needs of every human; the need for love and the need for power. The closer we get to intimacy, the more we get frightened we will be overcome and so we push back, try to dominate, or lose the ‘self’ in an enmeshed relationship. And as a result, in most male/female relationships, we find ourselves in a power struggle damaging the fulfillment of our need to be loved. All this is a result of our sin, but once we know our sin, gospel is needed. Paul’s words speak to us about our need for each other in His Kingdom. Christ’s greatest commandment to love God and one another is to be taught to every generation. It is to renew our mind and heart so that it will be demonstrated in our behavior.

What does female submission really mean in a companionate or egalitarian marriage? What is ‘loving your wife’ in the 21st century? Was man (male) reminded to “leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife” (Mt. 19:5 and Mk. 10:7) by Jesus when questioned about divorce because he is to mature in his independence, leave behind his desire to be loved and cared for by a woman and become the initiator (head) in loving and caring *for* a woman? When he does, is he to be the leader in creating the environment of love in the home? As God is love, Christ is love. And so man is to *be* love in his home. He is to tenderly nourish and care for his wife, not using his fear of closeness, his natural aggressiveness, or his greater strength to impede this “great mystery of oneness” (Eph. 5:32). Is love put into action by a male doing dishes, or working hard at listening and communicating so decisions can and will be made together? From my female perspective, to be head of a household means to establish a loving, safe place.

²⁴ Ibid.

Women provide this safe environment by not using their verbal ability to control or manipulate their husband. They use their ability to listen to the male perspective to demonstrate respect. They respect the reality that men will always and should feel the main responsibility to be the provider and realize that he feels value and worth when he is approved by the woman God gave him for whatever his hands/brain was designed to do. This then is not “lording it over”. Woman as responder to the man’s love helps to create the loving safe home initiated by her husband. In this kind of environment a man can rest without fear of being dominated. In this kind of home, he does not need to compete. Do we as the church not have a great deal more we are meant to say to the secular world about male and female relationships in the context of our modern society?

There is still an elephant in the room that I have not acknowledged. Is all this about ordination of women? No. And yes. LCMS cannot be afraid of seeking a fuller understanding of God’s intent for male(s) and female(s) in His kingdom at this point of history because humans (some males and some females) are afraid it will lead to ordination of women. As an individual, this has not been my main interest; it is not a calling I have felt. My concern is about helping women and men to be all God created them to be. But as I continued to study Scripture and focus on the issues and rationale that has been used to resist female teachers, females teaching older boys or men, women’s suffrage, and women teaching theology, I feel compelled to seek greater understanding of this issue.

Increasingly more women are studying Greek and systematic theology and can and do raise interesting and debatable points on the role of women in the church in today’s society. I am absolutely convinced that women need to be sitting side by side with male theologians discussing Scripture for greater understanding and in order to “speak to other people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation” I Cor. 14:3. I am absolutely convinced that **without the voice of women, the church is not hearing the voice of God.** God created in His image male and female, complementary, so much the same, yet different. God knows what He was doing.

I am grateful there was a proposal at the 1973 convention from the CTCR that the synod establish a task force on the role of women in the church with representation by women. Jean Garton was one of the seven women along with three pastors appointed to that Task Force. She was elected chair. I am grateful to Pres. Bohlman for appointing a Presidents Commission on Women in 1984. It is gratifying that two of that original group of nine, Jean Garton again and Marie Meyer, are with us at this gathering. I commend the courage they had to challenge the language used in the report “Women in the Church: Scriptural Principles and Ecclesial Practice” the CTCR was preparing to release at that time. I am grateful for men, husbands, and quite a large group of LCMS clergy who encourage women to keep asking the hard questions about how the gifts of women can be utilized in the church.

The formation of a group of women and men called “Different Voices, Shared Vision” in 1989, largely due to Marie Meyer’s leadership, provided one way for me to keep studying these issues. Marie Meyer, Marva Dawn, Dot Nuechterlein, and Elizabeth Yates presented scholarly, thoughtful papers on the difficult texts. Mary Todd wrote her dissertation on the history of the women’s issue in LCMS. Sadly these same women are seen by many to be rebels rather than the serious students of the Bible they are. Other female and male theologians as well have helped me try and resolve my cognitive dissonance.

Most recently, the Women's Leadership Institute has been formed. It is one of several Concordia University Wisconsin Servant Institutes designed to exert a Christian influence on the community, nation and world. Donna Streufert is quoted as saying it is a response to "the plea of female students . . . who approached women faculty members, saying: 'Give us role models of strong Christian women in leadership roles in the church'. . . . She goes on to say, "Women often experience inequities, prejudice and injustice as they try to serve our Lord in His church. **In addition, women often lack confidence in their own gifts and leadership skills**"²⁵ (bolding hers). Mary Hilgendorf was appointed Director of the WLI. She also is here today.

We are here, gathered 11 years after the fact, to respond to Resolution 3-10 made at the 1995 convention, "That the CTCR coordinate a comprehensive study of the scriptural relationship of man and woman, together with the faculties of both seminaries, *making use of other persons who are competent in the area of theology, including women.*"

How will we proceed? How will my granddaughter born in 1990 see herself challenged and encouraged to use the personality, abilities and gifts God has given her in the LCMS? God has things prepared for her to do. The church needs her to speak to a world that will continue to change and needs the voice of God to speak the calming words, "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever."

²⁵ Donna Streufert, "Getting Acquainted with the Women's Leadership Institute" promotional flyer.

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