

Sexual Complementarity - Lesson 1

by John Piper

John Piper's sermon emphasizes the biblical understanding of sexual complementarity and the importance of distinct gender roles in the church and society.

Duration: 52:42

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, John 14:6, Romans 12:1

Topics: "Biblical Manhood", "Complementarity"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the widespread confusion and uncertainty in our culture regarding the differences between masculinity and femininity. He emphasizes the importance of understanding and embracing the complementary nature of these differences. The speaker introduces the Danvers statement, a document that outlines the biblical perspective on complementarity, and encourages the audience to familiarize themselves with it. He expresses concern about the damage caused by egalitarianism, both in secular society and within Christian circles, and highlights the need for redemption and healing in this area.

Transcript

The following message is by Pastor John Piper. More information from Desiring God Ministries is available at www.desiringgod.org. Reading a few verses from Genesis chapter 1, verse 26 following, then God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth. So God created man in his own image.

In the image of God, he created him. Male and female, he created them. And God blessed them.

And God said to them, be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth. And God said, behold, I have given you every plant-yielding seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit. You shall have them for food.

And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food. And it was so. And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good.

Father, we are embarking now on five Wednesday nights to study what you did there in creating man in your image as male and female. And I pray for light to shine in our hearts, because there is so much damage being done today by a failure to take you and your ways into account. These are very precious realities to you.

The associations that you have drawn in your word between man and woman are of the highest caliber and the highest order. The world takes these things lightly, plays fast and loose, says they can make of them whatever they want, and do not take into account the designer. And so we are a mess.

And great pain is in the world. And so I pray, Lord, that we would be part of the redemption, part of the healing, part of the reclamation of a beautiful thing that you wrought. And I pray that those in this room right now would have eyes to see and ears to hear, and that you would give me guidance in how I guide us through these things.

Guard us from the evil one, guard us from deception, guard us from imbalance, guard us from any kind of detours that would be pointless or even harmful. Be here to be our teacher, Lord Jesus, by your Holy Spirit. Through Christ I pray.

Amen. The title of this seminar tonight and for the next four Wednesday nights after this one is Sexual Complementarity, the Pursuit of Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. And this is part of the Issues in Leadership TBI course.

Let me hold up some books. What I have here is a stack of egalitarian or evangelical feminist books and a stack of what I would call complementarian. It might be good for me to make a few definitions before I lift those up just because I know for many of you this will be the first time you've been exposed in any detail to the kinds of controversies that swirl around the issue of manhood and womanhood.

Let me define feminism the way I'm using it inside Christianity and inside evangelicalism. And I'll only define it to the degree that I disagree with it and leave aside for the time being elements of it that may be valuable. What I'm going to argue against is a mindset that resists making manhood and womanhood a significant factor in determining appropriate roles and behaviors.

So a mindset that says manhood and womanhood should not figure in significantly to determining roles and behaviors. Competency is the only thing that counts when justice is at stake inside and outside the church and in the family. What I mean by complementarity, which is the name I would like to have for myself and for our church rather than traditionalist, since I do want the Bible to come to bear and judge all traditions and not hierarchicalist because that overemphasizes structure to the exclusion of the beautiful mutual interdependence that is intended by complementarity.

Complementarity stresses that men and women are created equal before God as persons and with differences that complement, that's spelled with an E in the middle, not an I in the middle. With an I in the middle, you're saying something nice about somebody. When it has an E in the middle, it means you fit together well because there's a complement.

She's different and he's different and when they come together, they complement and complete each other. That's what we mean by complementarity. The differences that complement each other in harmony when the differences are taken seriously in the way God made them and when we behave in accordance with God's design in our complementarity.

So two definitions to set up two different ways of understanding the scriptures. Let me hold up these books first. These are all books that I disagree with.

And you can find these. Mary Stuart Van Leeuwen, *Gender and Grace*, a teacher of mine in seminary. Paul Jewett, who's now with the Lord, I believe, *Man as Male and Female*.

That is a seminal work, very, very important. Probably the most influential book and person, Gilbert Billazekian. I mean, inside evangelicalism, beyond sex roles.

Teaches at Wheaton or used to if he's still there or not. Is he still there? Anybody know? He's not. He's retired.

Another influential work by Gretchen Gabelin Hall, *Equal to Serve*. And then the two newest ones that I included as alternatives to Billazekian, because it's so significant and influential over the years. These are newer.

Rebecca Grutius, or however you pronounce that, Grutius. Anybody know how to pronounce that last name? What? Grothaus. Thank you.

I was way off. Good news for women. It's spelled G-R-O-O-T-H-U-I-S.

Good news for women and then women in the church, a biblical theology of women in ministry by Stanley Grins. Those are a sample. I couldn't fit any more in my briefcase.

I have more and perhaps should have brought some more. On the other side, this is written by a Catholic. *Man and Woman in Christ, an Examination of the Roles of Men and Women in Light of Scripture and Social Sciences*, Stephen Clark.

A very, very significant, weighty, deep work. James Hurley, some years ago. *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*.

These would be complementarian books that I'm holding up now. Very significant little book by George Knight, *The Role Relationship of Men and Women*. If you want to, you can come up afterwards and look at these.

A young woman who is part of a group that I'm a part of called Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, Mary Cassian, who is a Canadian and writes with great insight, *Women, Creation and the Fall*. And I would just say to our women, if you want a very dynamic and insightful speaker on this issue, besides Elizabeth Elliot, of course, I would lift up Mary Cassian as a person you would, I think, be very helped by. We would all be helped by.

And this is her most recent one, *The Feminist Gospel, The Movement to Unite Feminism with the Church*. She is very, very astute. Tom Schreiner, together with Andreas Kirstenberger and Scott Baldwin, edited this one.

Very weighty scholarly work on women in the church. A fresh analysis of First Timothy 2, 9 to 15. So that whole book is on just that little passage in First Timothy 2. And then the book that I worked on with Wayne Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, which is kind of a central staple in this whole issue in classes across the country, *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, a response to evangelical feminism.

In other words, a response to this pile of books here, at least the ones that were written before this was written. Now, since this has come out, probably about six of these chapters have been published independently in little books like this. So what's the difference? This is chapter one and the 50 questions, which I think is the most important chapter in the book, and hope that all of you will, if you don't have that book and you think it's too big and weighty for your house or your mind, then get this one.

It's only imposing because it's thick and you don't have to read it all. The chapters are independent, self-standing pieces. But this is my attempt.

I went away in May of, what was it, 90 or something like that. I can't even remember when this was published, 91. So probably it was May of 90.

I disappeared for five weeks down at Trinity Seminary and used our phenomenal postal system and all the things at my disposal to get 26 people to get on the page here and to produce, because we've been at this for years, and they weren't coming up with the goods. And so I had to, for five weeks, just over and over again hammer on their phones. And I drafted three of these chapters, namely this one and this one, and the one at the back responds to the CEB group.

So you can go on the line and see CBE, Council on Biblical Equality, would be the organization that would stand for biblical feminism, and Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. You go online and see their homepage and website, and you can see all of these. And there's thousands of pages.

This whole book is on the web. You don't even have to buy it. You can just print it.

You can't sell it, but you can print it, at least you're not supposed to. But I hope that this one you will get, because what I did here was simply try to pose every question I could think of during that May away that an evangelical feminist would ask me and answer it in this book. So it's the best resource that I have to offer inside that bigger book.

I want to start with posing the question, why this issue matters. And I'm going to start from the outside and move in from the secular impulses that are out there and show you the kinds of things that I think are weighing heavily on our culture in this regard. Here's a quote from a social historian, Jerry Muller of the Catholic University of America.

I shouldn't have put just because this is now, I think, 93. There it is. When I first put this down on paper.

Published to give you a handle for understanding the way the words gender and sex are being used in academic women's studies around the country. The influence of lesbianism is perhaps the prime reason for an increasing focus on gender defined as the social and cultural construction of sexual identity. In other words, not the natural construction, but the social and cultural construction of sexual identity is captured by the word gender in certain secular women's studies departments.

The key assumption behind such work is that while men and women are biologically differentiated, the characteristic qualities of maleness and femaleness are largely artifacts of culture and arbitrarily imposed cultural constructions at that. The emphasis on the relative importance of gender as opposed to sex, then, is intended to challenge the assumption that differences between men and women are either natural or immutable. End of quote.

You get that? In other words, in 1993, as this person did their study of the women's studies courses in universities across the country, the tendency to use gender studies, I didn't bring the most recent, *Beyond Eden*, but it strikes me then as remarkable that Mary Stuart Van Leeuwen's book here is called *Gender and Grace*, not *Sexuality and Grace*. Gender is carrying the connotation, which is why I switched the name of the course, that sexual differences, aside from the relatively insignificant plumbing differences or hair distribution or tone of voice, are artifacts of culture and arbitrarily imposed cultural constructions. They are neither natural nor immutable.

And therefore, for example, there would be nothing unnatural or culturally inappropriate about any kind of surgical procedure that could switch you back or forth between male and female because it is not a deep, personal, human reality any more than left-handedness is. In other words, in contemporary feminist usage, gender refers to what we are by social conditioning and sex refers to what we are by nature, and the shift in focus from sex to gender more and more assumes that maleness and femaleness are, at the root level of personhood, negligible realities. Now here's an amazing quote from 1972 already from Charlotte Bunch.

She argued like this, Heterosexuality separates women from each other. It makes women define themselves through men. It forces women to compete against each other for men and the privilege which comes through men and their social standing.

Lesbianism is the key to liberation and only women who cut their ties to male privilege can be trusted to remain serious in struggle against male dominance. That's as radical as it gets. In other words, lesbianism is the last and, for Charlotte Bunch, the only protection of equality.

She's driven by the logic of her own position that if heterosexuality is exalted to the place of norm, then a woman does not have the liberty to marry half the human race. And that is unnecessarily constricting. Same thing goes for men.

Now let's come into evangelicalism and trace out some of these impulses. Paul Jewett, my professor back in the late 60s and early 70s, he wrote this book. He wrote two books.

This one was his first and most important one, *Man as Male and Female*, in 1975. The groundbreaking book among evangelicals in the last 20 years was Paul Jewett called *Man as Male and Female*. In it, he set the pattern to be followed by two decades.

He said, on the one hand, quote, sexuality permeates one's individual being to its very depth. Now that's a very different statement than what we were just reading, and I agree with that entirely. It conditions every facet of one's life as a person.

That's an amazing statement in view of what he's about to concede. You can hardly overstate this. This is amazing.

But, on the other hand, he says that he shares the uncertainty of those who do not know, quote, what it means to be a man in distinction to a woman. He confesses that, quote, all human activity reflects a qualitative distinction which is sexual in nature. So now he's back to this main profound statement.

But, then he says, in my opinion, such an observation, namely that all human activity reflects a qualitative distinction which is sexual in nature, in my opinion, such an observation offers no clue to the ultimate meaning of that distinction. It may be that we shall never know what that distinction ultimately means. I call

this the tragedy of feminist agnosticism.

And it persists to this very day. Because what's missing in every one of these books, what's missing in every one of these books is an answer to an 11-year-old girl's question, Mommy, what does it mean to grow up and be a woman and not a man? Or an 11-year-old boy's question, Daddy, what does it mean to grow up and be a man and not a woman? And the question is very crucial because the not half is as important as the positive half. It won't work to answer those questions.

Well, to be a woman is to be kind and gentle and loving and responsible and have integrity and work hard and become competent, because those are things I want to be. You haven't helped the child at all in answering his question. What does it mean to grow up and be a woman and not a man? And if the only thing that a mommy or a daddy can answer is you're shaped differently, I think you've profoundly demeaned femininity and masculinity.

So Jewett set us up for 25 years of agnosticism. Namely, we just don't know what it means to be male or female. We don't know.

And that's pervaded the literature. And the argument then simply becomes, well, since we don't know what we are by nature, the only thing we have to go on is what you're good at. And so roles are entirely determined in terms of competencies and have nothing to do with what's rooted in nature.

Two of the books that I showed you here are Equal to Serve by Hull, Gender and Grace by Van Leeuwen. I call this The Tragic Feminist Call to be Sex Blind and The Tragic Feminist Call to be Gender Leveling. Here are the quotes.

And there are many such quotes in these books. Gretchen Gabelin Hull writes, Biblical feminists lovingly ask the Christian community to abandon artificial role playing and to be sex blind in assessing each individual's qualifications for ministry. So you may not, on the basis of sexuality, deny to a woman or a man any role in the church.

I want to point something out here. You see this word? This is a well-honed linguistic strategy. It's used in Washington abundantly.

And it's used in these books. And it's maddening and unfair. Biblical feminists lovingly ask the Christian community to abandon artificial role playing and to be sex blind in assessing.

Now, when you read this, you have no choice but to follow her or to be artificial. Those are your two choices. You can either follow her or be artificial.

She has committed what we call the fallacy of the excluded middle. My position is not touched by that sentence. I cannot find my position being responded to in any of these books.

Because they, in order to win the argument, always use pejorative language to describe the other side. Always. And there's an example of it.

There's going to be one in this sentence as well. So what's excluded here is not. And this is also this is also, of course, artificial.

Playing role playing. So not to go the route of being sex blind is to play at church and to play artificially at church. Now, what college student reading such a text is going to say, well, that's what I think we should

artificially play at church.

So there's there's no dealing with a responsible position here. I try to teach these six TBI guys. If you're going to write a book review of somebody you disagree with, you must state their position in half your paper in a way that if they read it, they approve.

That's courtesy. That's the way we have to do it. And I don't find it done.

Well, my position would not be to be artificial or to play, but be profoundly genuine and be blood earnest. And I think being sex blind is massively destructive in our culture. The tragic feminist called to be sex blind, because I tell you, if you're going to be sex blind in one place when it comes to roles and.

You're going to tend to be and move your daughters and your sons towards being sex blind everywhere. One of you came to me a few years ago and told me about a trip you had to make with a class in graduate school to Denver. Where they just arranged for the men and women to live in the same rooms.

Didn't bat an eye and gender leveling. And Mary Stewart Van Lewin expresses her confidence that the Bible's main thrust is the quote. Now, the Bible's main thrust is toward the leveling.

Not the maintenance of birth based. And now here's the here's the word status differences. You see, if you said, well, he's not what she really means.

She's only against bad status differences. No, she's not. She's against birth based differences.

That determine roles. But when you stick in the word status, well, nobody's going to argue for status differences. Nobody's going to try to say only men should have status.

I mean, some jerks might say that. But those of us who are trying to portray the beauty of the biblical vision of manhood and womanhood, we don't use language like that. We don't defend status differences.

We try to discern God's cherishing and his exalting of all the appropriate roles of adults and children and male and female. So, again, what you have is a tendency towards gender leveling, a tendency towards sex blindness and in the defense of it, the misuse of language to label the other side in such a way that nobody could find themselves in it. Which is the exclusion of the middle, which is where I find myself.

The damage, a word from James Dobson, lots of quotes from Dobson, bless his heart. He's been fighting this battle for a long time. He'll only fight it at one level, the level of the family.

I talked to him about this and he just said, I have so many battles to fight. And I have such a coalition united around fighting those battles that I don't want to alienate any more than I already do. So he's not ever going to talk about women pastors.

You will not hear Jim Dobson talk about women pastors as a problem. He does believe they're a problem, I believe. But that's just not a battle he's going to fight, whether women should be pastors of local churches.

But he fights tooth and nail for manhood and womanhood in the home in distinction and complementation. Feminist resistance to making manhood and womanhood significant in behavior and role determination is partner to some of the most painful social and spiritual issues of our day, says James Dobson. And I say, amen.

You see it? The resistance to making manhood and womanhood significant in behavior and role determination is a partner to some of the most painful and social, spiritual and spiritual issues of our day. I think that's true. Now, in 1987, some of us were so burdened by these things that we met in Danvers, Connecticut and put our heads together with the publisher from Crossway and several of us and thought we need a book that answers feminism and we need an organization that lifts up the beauty of manhood and womanhood in complementarity the way God designed it, that avoids these kinds of stereotypes and is a beautiful thing.

And so that was the birth of Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood and it was the birth of the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood and I encourage you to go to their website and find it, CBMW. Just put your search engine in there and you'll find it. I don't remember.

It might be just cbmw.org, I'm not sure. We produced first a Danvers statement. It's called Danvers because we did it in Danvers, Connecticut.

And I'm going to walk through part of it with you because to this day it remains a very valuable summary statement of what complementarity is and what I believe is biblical and will try to show you over the next four weeks is biblical. So I want to walk through the Danvers statement with you because the first part of it, the rationale, is a pickup on this damage here. The damage that is being done by egalitarianism in the secular realm and the damage that is being done by its various Christian forms is, I believe, significant.

So let's walk through the Danvers statement. Next week we will have a copy, one of these, for you all. I ordered 300 this week.

It will take a week for them to get here. So the Danvers statement we'll put in your hand so you don't need to worry about writing all these points down. They're in the little pamphlet.

And I do hope there is a little journal that this cbmw produces and to order that and get on a subscription list I think would be valuable for your family and certainly if you're a leader at the church to keep up with these things. So the Danvers statement, December 3rd, 1987. If you wonder, how does something like this come to be that forms the center of an organization? Well, you get a group of people together, 6, 8, 10 or whatever, and you send one of them, namely me, off to stay up all night and draft the first draft and then bring it back in the morning and everybody rips it to shreds.

And then you go away again for another few hours and you redraft. We did this. I see you nodding your head there on the master planning team.

And that's the way it has to be done. Committees cannot write anything. They can only unwrite things.

Committees can't write. One person writes, the rest unwrite, then you rewrite, and then hopefully you come to a mind, and we did. And so this isn't necessarily the way I first drafted it, but I'm real happy the way it turned out.

So these are the several points of the rationale. Now, we have been moved in our purpose by the following contemporary developments which we observe with deep concern. Number one, the widespread uncertainty and confusion in our culture regarding the complementary differences between masculinity and femininity.

I've already given you my main illustration of that with little boys and girls who, if they ask their mommy and daddy, what does it mean to grow up and be a man and not a woman, or a woman and not a man, I'll tell you, there's not many parents today who could answer that question. I don't do many weddings anymore. I used to do lots of them.

And I would generally ask the couples, as we did our premarital counseling, can you give me in a nutshell how you understand the difference between manhood and womanhood and the effect on roles in your marriage? Nobody could do it. None of them. Unless they read the book or something.

It isn't in the air. It is militantly not in the air. That question is simply so explosive and loaded in our culture that to even ask it will get you crucified at work.

So, it is a widespread uncertainty and confusion in the men in this room. What does it mean to be a man? The men in this room are scared to open doors. They're scared to ask certain questions.

They're scared that the whole normativity of manhood and womanhood that once was a kind of consensus has exploded, and so men are kind of, if I say this or if I do this, I will be perceived this way. And I can remember Benjamin down at Roosevelt High just getting nailed one day for something he did nice, according to my teaching, for a woman, a young woman. You treat women differently.

Better, namely. You don't mouth off and you don't get rough and you don't touch and you don't hit and you don't treat a woman like a man. There's some tenderness here and there's some politeness.

There's a certain demeanor that honors her. Well, that is not a popular notion. And he was considered to be, by this one young lady, to have, what was the phrase? I forget.

It wasn't positive. But I said, well, that's okay. You just can avoid her, I suppose.

The tragic effects of this confusion in unraveling the fabric of marriage woven by God out of the beautiful and diverse strands of manhood and womanhood. So not only is there this general confusion about manhood and womanhood, it is unraveling the fabric of marriage as God meant it to be. Now, the world, I understand, doesn't know what marriage is about because they don't believe the Bible.

You can't, like I said last Sunday, know what humans are about, let alone what marriage is about, if God doesn't tell you what marriage is about. You'll say, well, it's about sexual gratification or it's about friendship or it's about have somebody cook your food or have somebody make your money or have somebody to protect you in a dark alley. It's just about, we'll think up things that it's about when none of those may be what it's about.

We know what it's about. We'll get to this next week, Lord willing. It's about a parable of the way Christ loves His church.

That's what marriage is about. Marriage is about displaying in the world the covenant love that God has for His people and the beautiful, freeing, courageous, yielded love that the church has for her Lord. And what's being made of marriage inside and outside the church undoes that entirely.

And so that's huge. So this is not a small thing. It's not a small thing that's at stake here.

Third, our third concern, the increasing promotion given to feminist egalitarianism with accompanying distortions or neglect of the glad harmony portrayed in Scripture between the loving, humble leadership of

redeemed husbands and the intelligent, willing support of that leadership by redeemed wives. Now that we'll unpack in the weeks to come. But you can see what I think is being torpedoed by so much feminist egalitarianism.

There is a glad harmony that God means to exist in marriage. And I know that dozens of you in this room are single, okay? I'm not unaware of that. I was so aware of that when I was putting this together down in Trinity.

I spent days writing the introductory chapter on singleness. So the first people I address are singles in this book, knowing that they would feel lost if the rest of the book were all they got. I think what we're saying here is tremendously relevant to single people, even if you don't ever get married.

In the way you live your life as woman and live your life as man. Marriage does not create manhood and womanhood. Is that clear? Marriage does not create manhood and womanhood.

It is one form of expressing it in relationship. And there are other forms of expressing it in relationship. And the church is meant to be family to single people, in which those forms get fulfilled in significant ways.

We'll try to touch on that as we go along. But here we're talking about marriage. Here's my definition of headship.

Loving, humble leadership of redeemed husbands. And here's my definition of submission. The intelligent, willing support of that leadership by redeemed wives.

I think I can say it even better than that, but we'll save that for later. That is just being lost. It's being lost by people who do not want to say that womanhood implies that and manhood implies that.

Four. The widespread ambivalence regarding the values of motherhood, vocational homemaking, and the many ministries historically performed by women. Now, I think since 1987, there's been a lot of change.

Feminism is not the same thing it was ten years ago. And a lot of realism has set in. And women are with a clear conscience and their heads held high, returning home.

Many of them. Not with their tail between their legs, as they were once forced to do by anybody who thought that if you had an ounce of competency in you, you wouldn't spend your time training your children and making a home. You would spend your time typing or managing a bank or driving a truck or holding a yellow flag while the men dug ditches or something else or getting down in the ditch.

It's a sad thing to see, I think. The need that some women have felt to prove that they can do as much grunt work as men have to. Five.

The growing claims of legitimacy for sexual relationships which have biblically and historically been considered illicit or perverse and the increase in pornographic portrayal of human sexuality. The legitimacy of homosexuality and lesbianism that is front burner issue today has been aided and abetted unwittingly and unintentionally by egalitarianism. Because there is an inevitable logic and tendency that says as you diminish nature as the warrant and ground of role, protections against the interchangeability of nature are removed.

And it is a small step in saying that Galatians 3.28 There is neither male nor female implies women and men can have all the same roles. It's a small step to saying they can marry the same people. So a woman

has a right to marry a man, a man has a right to marry a man.

It's a small step. If nature goes, then the boundaries between heterosexuality and homosexuality go. God didn't set it up this way.

God didn't draw the line between egalitarianism at the role level and then say no, can't marry the same people. He drew the line further back in order that there would be a beautiful harmonious marriage where the nature of manhood and womanhood could find complimentary expression. Where that is torpedoed, as it is by millions of evangelicals today, then the door is opened a little wider to homosexuality.

Now you need to know that these people are screaming right now. Okay? I've said this in front of them at seminary, I've said it at Wheaton, I've said it at Gordon, I've said it at Fuller, and they scream at me. Stop laying that at our feet.

So you need to know that's what they'd say right now. Do not lay homosexuality at our feet. We think it's wrong just as much as you do.

Fine, I'm glad that you do, and I am thankful. But your view tends toward it. And, I'll try to show, is unbiblical and therefore removes a biblical protection against a further slide into a cultural malaise and corruption in this regard.

Six, the upsurge of physical and emotional abuse in the family. Seven, the emergence of roles of men and women in church leadership that do not conform to biblical teaching but backfire in the crippling of biblically faithful witness. I'm presuming a lot here, which I'll have to support later.

These are the things we observe that make the Denver Statement and complementarity needed. I'm almost, I'm going to have to wrap this up here in the next few minutes. We notice also the increasing prevalence and acceptance of hermeneutical oddities, that is, interpretational oddities devised to reinterpret apparently plain meanings of biblical texts.

Ephesians 5, 1 Timothy 2, it is amazing the lengths to which people will go to evade what seems to be plain to most everybody. Nine, the consequent threat to biblical authority as the clarity of Scripture is jeopardized and the accessibility of its meaning to ordinary people is withdrawn into the restricted realm of the technical ingenuity. There's a great danger here.

Many of you in this room have studied these things and thrown up your hands. You've just thrown up your hands. Say, if John Piper on the one side and Bill Ezekiel on the other side with their educations and their devotion to the Lord can't agree on this, there's no hope for me to come to a mind on it.

So I'm not going to think about it anymore and I'll just do whatever the group I'm in seems to want to do. That's tragic. When the Bible is taken out of the hands of the lay people, put in the hands of the experts who can't agree and thus the lay people simply do not treat the Bible as authoritative anymore on this issue.

They just say there is no way to come to a conclusion on this issue because the experts can't get it. Well, let me just put in here. There has been a point in history on every major doctrine that you cherish when the experts couldn't agree.

Everyone, deity of Christ, authority of the scriptures, the atonement, every one of them at a point in history could not get the experts to agree. Fortunately, the battle was fought. The day was won for the deity of Christ, the Trinity and these things so that we don't wrestle the same.

This is going to be won one way or the other someday. Ten, behind all this, the apparent accommodation of some within the church for the spirit of the age at the expense of winsome, radical, biblical authenticity, which in the power of the Holy Spirit may reform rather than reflect our ailing culture. Okay, I meant to get through the affirmations and beyond, way beyond, but obviously I hadn't planned well enough.

So we'll just pick it up here and we'll label these tapes part one, part two, part three, part four, part five. And I will start right here with these affirmations. And we will take the time next week to get into a biblical text.

Genesis one to three, Ephesians five, First Timothy two. And we'll take as much time as we can over the weeks. But this is by way of introduction to show why this burns today just as hot as it did twelve years ago and why I hope you will pray earnestly that you come to a mind about these things.

Really for the sake of your soul, for the sake of a possible marriage or the one you're in and for the sake of the church that you are a part of. Because all of those are at stake here. The health, the integrity, the depth, the wholesomeness of the church and the marriage and their display of Christ to the world are at stake.

So Father, I pray that you'd go with us as we contemplate these things this week and you would help us to be faithful in our study and open and honest in dealing with all the evidences and that you would protect your church from error and that you'd give us a docile spirit towards your spirit. In Jesus' name, Amen. Thank you for listening to this message by John Piper, pastor for preaching at Bethlehem Baptist Church in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

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