

The Dignified Status and Proper Treatment of Women

In recent days, there has been a heightened awareness of and emphasis on the widespread objectification and mistreatment of women in numerous sectors of our society. Offenses have been brought to light that occurred in the entertainment, governmental, business, and even ecclesiastical worlds. In many cases, this has brought shame and reproach upon the reputation of the church and, by extension, upon the reputation of Christ. At times, critics have seized upon these abuses and used them as an opportunity to attack Scripture and/or the complementarian¹ understanding of gender roles.

In response to all these occurrences and developments, we wish to articulate our position on the dignified status and proper treatment of women. We affirm that:

- Men and women are alike created in God's image (Gen. 1:26–27; Gen. 2:15–25), and are therefore equal in value, dignity, humanity, and worth;
- In Christ, men are not spiritually or religiously advantaged or privileged over women; both men and women are equally redeemed, adopted, justified, forgiven, and accepted in Christ (Gal. 3:28; 1 Pet. 3:7);
- Christian men should strive always to follow Christ's example in valuing women and treating them with respect and kindness (e.g. Luke 7:36–50; 8:43–48; 10:38–42; 13:16; John 4:7–26), both inside and outside the local church;
- Christian husbands should foster a spirit of Christ-like love, gentleness, and understanding within the home (Eph. 5:25; 1 Pet. 3:7);
- Objectification of women is both violative of Biblical sexual ethics (Matt. 5:27–28; 1 John 2:16) and inconsistent with the dignity intrinsic to all women as bearers of the divine image (Gen. 1:26–27; James 3:9); and
- Abuse (whether physical or emotional) and harassment of women are grave sins (Prov. 3:29; 1 Cor. 6:18; 13:4–8; 1 Thess. 4:3–5; Titus 3:2), and allegations of abuse or harassment should never be taken lightly.

¹ *Complementarianism* is defined as “A major Christian view on gender roles that holds that women and men are spiritually equal but have distinct and complementary roles in the home, church, and wider society. This view stands in opposition to egalitarianism, which holds that men and women have equivalent roles. Complementarian positions usually hold that certain positions in church leadership are reserved for men only, and that in a marriage the husband is properly the head of the family and has some degree of authority over the wife” [“Complementarianism,” in *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*, ed. John D. Barry et al (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016)].

Furthermore, concerning the controversial subject of Biblical gender roles, we affirm that:

- The Bible teaches a complementarian approach to gender roles² (1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:21–33; 1 Tim. 2:11–15; 3:1–7); however, this should never be taken as an excuse for male leaders to demean or take advantage of women, or to exercise their God-given authority in a harsh, heavy-handed, or self-serving manner (Matt. 20:25–28; 2 Cor. 1:24; 1 Pet. 5:3);
- Biblical *submission*, properly understood and executed, is not demeaning nor does it imply a lessening of dignity, worth, giftedness, or value; rather, it is a voluntary (never forced or coerced) expression of humility and willingness to follow God-ordained roles, just as Christ humbly submitted Himself to the will of the Father (Luke 22:42; John 6:38; Phil. 2:6–8) without thereby becoming demeaned or inferior; and
- Women have an invaluable role to play and contribution to make in the church’s mission of making disciples from every nation (Matt. 28:19; Acts 1:14; Rom. 16:1–2; Titus 2:3–5). We praise and thank God for all His male and female servants who seek, above all else, to know Christ and to make Him known.

Resolved by the messengers of the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches, meeting together in regular conference June 26–29, 2018, at Hamilton Hills Church in Fishers, Indiana.

² For further detail on the GARBC’s complementarian position, see 1984 resolution “Women’s Role in the Church and Home” and 1994 resolution “Male-Only Preachers.”