

A Bibliography | Complementarianism

Purpose

This list of suggested texts is to give ministers, elected officers, and lay people accessible resources to guide and to support prayerful discussion in their parishes. It is not meant to be a comprehensive list. The authors hold a range of views along a complementarian spectrum. *Resources marked with an * indicates a resource that will be particularly useful for lay people for whom complementarianism is a new idea.*

Biblical Studies

*Sharon James, [*God's Design for Women: Biblical Womanhood for Today*](#) (2007). A discussion of the feminist movement and its impact on women's role in society, then looks at the biblical basis for God's design for women in the family, the church, and at work, before contrasting this with egalitarian views. There is also a course workbook and double DVD set available, but you must have a multi-region DVD player to play its PAL format.

*Carrie Sandom, [*Different by design: God's blueprint for men and women*](#) (Christian Focus, 2012). Accessible discussion of the biblical basis for different roles of men and women in marriage, the church, and the workplace as part of God's good design for humanity. Places key texts in the context of a Bible overview of men and women within God's salvation plan, from Genesis to Revelation. Plenty of examples and illustrations, which makes this a good book to give to congregation members thinking through this issue. Goes much broader than just the 'should women be ordained/preach?' issue to look at the implications of a complementarian viewpoint on the whole of life, in contrast to the influence of feminism on society.

*Claire Smith, [*God's Good Design: What the Bible really says about men and women*](#) (Matthias Media, 2012). Smith gives short, clear exposition of seven key Bible passages relevant to the debate about women's roles in the church and family. Also deals with common objections, contemporary feminism, and includes a chapter on domestic abuse.

*Wendy Alsup, [*Is the Bible Good for Women?: Seeking Clarity and Confidence Through a Jesus-Centered Understanding of Scripture*](#) (Multnomah, 2017). Wendy Alsup offers a Jesus-centered way of interpreting some difficult passages of the Bible related to women. These are passages the Bible's critics love to offer as proof that God's Word hurts women. Rather than a line-for-line rebuttal, Alsup attempts to shift the debate by providing counsel in how to read the Bible as a whole story focused on Christ.

William Webb, [*Slaves, Women & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis*](#) (IVP, 2001). Included in this list because it is cited by ACNA bishops who ordain women to the priesthood. Because of the influence and the complexity of Webb's "redemptive-movement hermeneutic", this book deserves to be taken seriously by complementarians. Although Webb raises many interesting and challenging questions regarding cultural relativity, *Slaves, Women and Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis* is a deeply flawed book that fundamentally contradicts the principle of *sola Scriptura* in Articles 6, 20 and 34 of the Thirty-nine articles, replacing the moral authority of the Scriptures with the moral authority of a "better ethic," an ethic that Webb claims to be able to discover through a complex hermeneutical process entirely foreign to the way God intended the Scriptures to be read, understood, believed, and obeyed.

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Benjamin Reaoch, [*Women, Slaves, and the Gender Debate: A Complementarian Response to the Redemptive-Historical Hermeneutic*](#) (P & R, 2012). Reaoch's academic treatment of Webb's Redemptive-Movement-Hermeneutic is well-balanced and fair and sheds much insight on key NT passages related to the role of woman. His work agrees with other complementarian responses, but he offers a more thorough and systematic analysis of Webb's hypothesis concerning the key NT passages related to the submission of slaves and women.

Wayne Grudem, [*Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism?*](#) (Crossway, 2006). Grudem purpose in this book is to answer the question of how important is it to get the role of women in the church right? Is it a first-order issue, or is it time for Christians to have a wide range of views on the subject? Grudem argues polemically that the stakes are very high indeed. He works hard to present the material and to cover all the pastoral objections you are likely to come across in a way that is understandable to non-experts in the field. Although it is not a book to give to an egalitarian friend!

Adreas and Margaret Köstenberger, [*God's Design for Man and Woman: A Biblical-Theological Survey*](#) (Crossway, 2014). Perhaps the "go to" resource for complimentarians, the greatest contribution of this book is the sheer scope of passages covered in both the OT and the NT. The Köstenbergers here do a tremendous job of showing not only excellent exegetical details, but also historical background and biblical-theological connections that must be made for proper interpretation. The trajectory of OT to NT is noted clearly, and a pattern of biblical manhood and womanhood emerges. Another strength is the accessibility of this book. The language is friendly toward the average church member, and the exegetical work is not rushed. The authors take their time making their points, show how it comes together from a number of angles, and offer crucial and relevant implications that emerge for us today.

Pastoralia

*Lis Goddard and Clare Hendry, [*The Gender Agenda: Discovering God's Plan for Church Leadership*](#) (IVP UK, 2010). A friendly and respectful debate between two ordained women, one complementarian and one egalitarian, based on a real email correspondence between them. Looks at relevant Scripture passages and identifies areas of disagreement and agreement in their application to the church. Useful to engage with more skeptical congregation members who hold an egalitarian position by default but want to consider 'both sides of the argument' from an evangelical viewpoint.

*Aimee Bird, [*No Little Women: Equipping All Women in the Household of God*](#) (P&R Publishing, 2016). Aimee Byrd takes on a range of problems that are not often addressed in the same work: women's ministries and women themselves who lack proper theological training; pastors who neglect the training and the gifts of the women who could be deployed in the kingdom to great effect; and the hyper-complementarianism that is itself bad theology. Each chapter concludes with a series of discussion questions for members and church leaders.

*G. Furman and K. B. Nielson (eds.), [*Word-filled women's ministry: loving and serving the church*](#) (Crossway, 2015). Outlines a vision for the growth and support of pastor-led Word-based women's ministry in local churches, training women in how to handle the Bible and teach

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it to other women. Produced out of the Gospel Coalition stable, with chapters contributed by women involved in women's ministry from the US, UK and Australia.

*Jane Tooher, '[Overflowing with ministry opportunities](#)' - *Crossway magazine* (2014). A helpful article on how complementarianism, far from stifling women's ministry roles, liberates women to play an essential role in the life of the church – looks at training, specific ministry areas, and how these provide a well-rounded and enriching vision of men and women working together in the church.

There are also many helpful resources, including book reviews and articles by women engaged in women's ministry, on the website of the Sydney-based organization, [Equal But Different](#). They state: *Equal But Different exists to testify to the unchanging truth of God's word—especially as it applies to the unity, equality and complementarity of male and female in God's creation, in marriage, and in ministry. We provide resources to help people think biblically about gender issues.*

Recent Anglican History

The Church of England is perhaps the most recent province of the Anglican Communion to approve the ordination of woman to the priesthood when its General Synod voted in 1992 to allow women to be ordained as priests. A link to a survey of key arguments and passages from the 1980's-90's may still be found here:

http://archive.churchsociety.org/issues_new/ministry/wompriest/iss_ministry_wompriest_intro.asp

Geoffrey Kirk, [Without Precedent: Scripture, Tradition, and the Ordination of Women](#) (Wipf and Stock, 2016). This is very much an historian's book told from an anglo-catholic perspective. Kirk chronicles the details of argument and debate in the Church of England that led to the ordaining of women as priests, and ultimately as bishops.

Feminism

*Kirsten Birkett, [The Essence of Feminism](#) (Matthias Media) A brief history of the feminist movement by an 'ex-feminist'. Kirsten Birkett provides a readable critique of the ethical and philosophical inconsistencies behind the feminist movement, and its impact on society and on the lives of modern women. Useful for Christian readers beginning to question feminist assumptions.

*See also commentary in books by Sharon James, Claire Smith, Carrie Sandom, and Margaret Köstenberger, above.

Small Groups

*Sarah Collins, [Biblical Womanhood: Ten studies for individuals or groups](#) (new revised edition, Good Book Guides) A set of Bible studies covering women's issues: marriage, singleness, beauty, relationships, children etc., all within the context of God's redemption of sinners through Jesus Christ.