

WHAT WINGER PRESENTLY GETS WRONG WITH

GENESIS 1 – 3:

‘WAS WOMEN’S SUBMISSION JUST A CURSE TO BE OVERTURNED?’

Revised 12 December 2022

To understand the Bible’s teaching about women and men, why not start at the beginning?

This article responds to Mike Winger’s YouTube video ‘Women in Ministry Part 2: Was Women’s Submission Just a Curse to Be Overturned?’, where he discusses Genesis 1 – 3.¹

If you are in a hurry, go to www.bit.ly/3HyrtU7 for a quick summary.

You can see our online or pdf articles on other videos by Mike at www.terranwilliams.com/articles/. Or use these links:

- *[Part 2 \(Genesis\) — www.bit.ly/40lo9oh](http://www.bit.ly/40lo9oh)*
- *[Part 3 \(OT Women\) — www.bit.ly/3jAjCNX](http://www.bit.ly/3jAjCNX)*
- *[Part 4 \(NT Women\) part A — www.bit.ly/3JDVRiB](http://www.bit.ly/3JDVRiB)*
- *[Part 4 \(NT Women\) part B — www.bit.ly/3X08GXx](http://www.bit.ly/3X08GXx)*
- *[Part 8 \(Meaning of Head\) — www.bit.ly/3RwliET](http://www.bit.ly/3RwliET)*
- *[Part 9 \(Wives submit\) — www.bit.ly/3l8CmVv](http://www.bit.ly/3l8CmVv)*
- *[Part 10 \(1 Cor 11, Head Covering\) — www.bit.ly/3Y2Zp2l](http://www.bit.ly/3Y2Zp2l)*

Still to come: Part 5 (Female Apostles), Part 11 (1 Cor 14, Silencing Women), Part 12 (1 Tim 2).

Please do not misunderstand our title ‘What Winger Presently Gets Wrong’ as implying any personal criticism of Mike. On the contrary, by including his name in the title, we are acknowledging the prominence of the ministry to which the Lord has called him. His Bible teaching is often of good quality and of much benefit to many people. He is a valued brother in Christ. But on this topic of Women in Ministry we are convinced that he has made mistakes and has misread Scripture.

Who are we, and why are we responding to Mike Winger?

*Andrew Bartlett is based in the UK. He is the author of **Men and Women in Christ: Fresh Light from the Biblical Texts** (2019). He has been studying Scripture for nearly 60 years. In his day job as an international arbitrator and judge, he specializes in dispassionate analysis of texts, evidence and arguments. He has a degree in theology and has served in lay leadership in several churches.*

¹ The video can be found on Mike’s own site biblethinker.org and on YouTube.

*Terran Williams is a South African pastor-teacher, with a ministry of planting and nurturing churches. He is the author of **How God Sees Women: The End of Patriarchy** (2022) and a number of other books.*

'Complementarianism' subordinates women under men's authority in the church and in the home. When Andrew and Terran wrote their books, Andrew was a member of a complementarian church and Terran had just completed his long tenure as a leading pastor of a complementarian church. They each engaged with leading scholarly complementarian works and independently concluded that God's word does not subordinate women under men.

Mike Winger started releasing his video teachings on 'Women in Ministry' soon after Terran's book was published. Because Mike's lengthy videos have been watched by many thousands of people, he has emerged as one of the world's most influential complementarian teachers. On reviewing Mike's videos, Andrew and Terran found that there were substantial inadequacies in Mike's research, reasoning, and handling of Scripture.

Since the ordinary believer is more likely to get their information about Scripture from free online resources than from scholarly books, Andrew and Terran decided to team up and write some freely available responses to Mike's teaching. Terran credits Andrew with doing the lion's share of the work.

We love Mike's heart. He says: 'If you're a scholar who's really studied in this area and you want to give me pushback, I really would like to read it now. If I'm wrong, I want to know it. Love to see that pushback.' [Part 8 video, 0hr6mins] We commend Mike for his openness, and we thank him for his invitation. We are hopeful that his engaging with our feedback will result in a good conversation in which we all make real progress in our understanding of God's word.

We also commend him for trying hard to think clearly and teach biblically. But if you think that Mike consistently succeeds in that aim, we urge you to read first our two-part article responding to his video about Women Leaders in the New Testament, at www.bit.ly/3YPVNRr

CONTENTS

Man's authority over woman?

Principal errors

The big picture of how Mike's position relates to the text

Shape and content of Genesis 2-3

The argument for man's authority over woman

What 'Adam' stands for

Man made before Woman (1)

The Man is given God's command not to eat from the tree of knowledge (2)

Woman made for Man (#)

The Man names 'Woman' (4)

After the disobedience God approaches the Man first (6)

Adam's curse is on all mankind and earth whereas Eve's curse is only in relation to women (#)

Cumulative impact

The institution of male rule

Male rule *versus* one flesh

Creation and new creation

Conclusion

Short postscript on 'roles'

Man's authority over woman?

Mike Winger poses this question in the title of his Women in Ministry Part 2 video: **'Was women's submission just a curse to be overturned?'**

The debate which Mike addresses is the debate about the man's rule over the woman, which appears to be presented in Genesis 3:16 as an adverse consequence of human disobedience to God. Is patriarchy (the one-way-only rule of men over women) part of God's original good design, or is it a consequence of human sin?

Mike reviews chapters 1 – 3 of Genesis. Unlike many 'complementarians', Mike's answer is not about men and women in general but specifically husbands and wives. The substance of his answer is: *Man's authority over woman in marriage is not a curse to be overturned, because it is established in Genesis 2, before the disobedience.*

The purpose of this article is to explain that Mike gives the wrong answer, because he misinterprets Scripture. Man's rule over woman is not established in Genesis 2. And the Bible does not say anywhere that husbands ought to exercise authority over their wives.²

We must also point out that Mike has introduced some new confusion into the debate because he has misunderstood what the debate is about. He sees the debate in terms of his title: **'Was women's submission just a curse to be overturned?'** The correct answer to that question is: *certainly not, because an attitude of submission in personal relationships between adults is a Christian duty, which is repeatedly taught in the New Testament.* Believers are taught to treat other people as ranking higher than themselves. A wife's submission to her husband is an example of this, but that does not mean husbands are exempt from this duty.

Mike's title misses the central point of the debate, which is not about women's submission but about the one-way-only rule of men over women.³

We will come back to this confusion when we discuss Genesis 3:16.

Principal errors

The errors in what Mike says about Genesis chapters 1 – 3 are in two main areas:

- (1) his argument that various features of Genesis 2 – 3 *imply* that God has given to husbands a role of leadership authority over their wives,
- (2) his disregard of the narrative technique and structure of Genesis 2 – 3.

Sorry to say, his conclusion rests on some shallow mis-readings of the text.

In addition, he characterizes Genesis 1 – 3 as 'foundational', without a clear recognition that *the new creation* also needs to be considered before we can draw conclusions about how Genesis 1 – 3 is relevant to life in Christ.

We encourage you to open your Bible, review what Mike Winger says, consider this response, and prayerfully make up your own mind regarding what Genesis 1 – 3 actually teaches about men and women.

² This article draws especially from Andrew Bartlett, *Men and Women in Christ: Fresh Light from the Biblical Texts* (IVP, 2019), chapters 2 and 5. We are grateful also for helpful comments received from Mary Conway and from Karen Strand Winslow.

³ We use the term 'one-way-only' to distinguish Mike's view from the mutual and equal authority of husband and wife described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 7. By 'one-way-only', we mean that, according to Mike, the husband has authority over the wife, but the wife does not have authority over the husband. We are not referring to 'absolute' authority or 'domineering' authority. Mike does *not* teach that the husband has absolute or domineering authority.

If you find that we have made some errors of our own, please write and tell us, so that we can make any needed corrections. You can email us at terranwill -at- gmail.com.⁴ Please put these words in the subject-line: Winger Part 2.

The big picture of how Mike's position relates to the text

We agree with Mike that in Genesis 1 there is a real equality of men and women, since both are God's image, and both are given the same task. As God's representatives, their task is to be co-rulers (Genesis 1:26-28). Humankind is made in God's image "so that they may rule ..." (1:26, NIV).

So, Mike *correctly* says:

'Male and female are both given dominion over the earth without any differentiation. Any limiting of a woman's authority to subdue creation seems wrong.'

There is certainly nothing in Genesis 1 about man ruling over woman.

Likewise, in Genesis 2 there is nothing said expressly about man ruling over woman.

The *first mention* of man ruling over woman is not until Genesis 3:16, where the man's rule is presented as one of the adverse consequences of the disobedience, along with painful toil and physical death.

In his title, Mike uses the phrase 'a curse to be overturned' because he has firmly in mind that our Lord came to deal with the consequences of the disobedience and take away the curse.

We agree with this central tenet.

For example, what is the first word to come out of the Risen Lord's mouth? It is, 'Woman ...' (John 20:15). John's narrative tells us that Jesus was raised on 'the first day of the week', pointing to the first day of the new creation (20:1). Rising from death, Jesus re-enacts and brings to fulfilment the story of Adam who awakens from his deep garden-sleep to find Eve, whom he delights in and calls 'Woman', then later 'Eve ... the mother of the living'. And so Mary Magdalene, in this moment of *déjà vu*, represents the church of the living in the era of the new creation – and especially women who are to be celebrated as heralds, bringing the life-giving word of Jesus and his resurrection.

Why 'especially women'?

Because it was a woman who, in the garden of the first creation, taught the serpent's deadly message to Adam. But Jesus's resurrection conquers the curse. So now, in the garden of the empty tomb and of new creation, the disobedience is reversed. In faithful obedience to Jesus'

⁴ You'll need to replace " -at- " with "@".

word, Eve's joyful daughter is chosen to carry God's life-giving message to the sorrowing sons of Adam (20:17). And a new world breaks into the midst of this old and broken one – bringing with it the glorious possibility of women standing shoulder to shoulder with men on the frontlines of the mission and rule of God (compare Genesis 1:26-28).

The honor of being the first witness and herald of the resurrection takes away the shame of being the first to disobey. By giving this honor to a woman, the Risen Lord signals the undoing of the curse. By this affirming and prophetic action, he shows that woman is a trusted partner, enlisted in God's mission to bless and renew the world.

Many interpreters consider that male rule over women is one of the adverse consequences of disobedience which is taken away in Christ. But Mike argues that the correct conclusion is different. According to him, Genesis 2 – 3 teaches that men's one-way authority over women in marriage is part of God's good design before the disobedience.

He admits that Genesis does not say anything *expressly* about men ruling over women before the disobedience. But he says that a husband's authority over his wife is *implied*.

Church history teaches the need for great caution in using implications from Scripture to establish Christian doctrine. It can be dangerous to go beyond what is written or to join dots that were not meant to be joined.⁵

Since Genesis 1 teaches men's and women's joint authority, and since the first mention of man's rule over woman is in God's statement of the consequences of the disobedience, on the face of it the supposed *implication* appears improbable. To establish it, Mike needs to give strong and convincing reasons. He has a mountain to climb.

If we are going to consider whether teaching is *implied* in the text of Scripture, though not actually *stated*, it is vital that we first get a good understanding of the passage that we are looking at. So, before we consider the details of Mike's reasoning, we need to look at the overall shape and content of Genesis 2 – 3. Later on, we will find that some of our questions are answered by noticing the Genesis writer's connections and emphases.

Shape and content of Genesis 2-3

We are all familiar with the narrative structure of seven days in Genesis 1. Genesis 2 – 3 also has a sevenfold narrative structure. There are seven scenes, arranged in a concentric symmetry, or inverted parallelism.

The seven scenes may be summarized as follows:

A1 (2:4–17) creation of Man, placed in the Garden;

⁵ *Men and Women in Christ: Fresh Light from the Biblical Texts*, 84-85 (chapter 5, under 'Differentiation of man and woman').

B1 (2:18–25) creation of Woman and animals, relationships among creatures;

C1 (3:1–5) dialogue about eating the fruit;

D (3:6–7) narrative of eating the fruit;

C2 (3:8–13) dialogue about eating the fruit;

B2 (3:14–21) punishment of creatures, hostile relationships among them;

A2 (3:22–24) expulsion of Man from the Garden.⁶

Scene A1 tells of the creation of Man, Man’s task in the Garden, and the prohibition on eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Scene B1 tells of the creation of Woman. The narrative climax of the second scene is the Man’s exclamation (v 23): ‘This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, for she was taken out of Man.’⁷

A theological lesson is drawn from Scene B1 in verse 24: ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.’ This conclusion, or punchline, does not move the narrative onwards. It is an authoritative explanation, to help the listener or reader understand the significance of the Scene.

The explanatory punchline is foundational to Christian teaching about marriage. It is quoted repeatedly in the New Testament (Matthew 19:5; Mark 10:7-8; 1 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 5:31). Jesus describes it as spoken by our Creator.⁸

The final verse of Scene B1 (2:25) sums up the condition of the Man and Woman before they disobeyed the prohibition: they were naked and felt no shame. This suggests a harmonious existence. It sets up the transition into the next part of the story, where they disobey, leading to fear and shame.

Genesis 3 narrates their disobedience – traditionally described as the ‘fall’, though that word is not used in the Bible to describe it. The eating of the fruit (Scene D) is the pivotal action in the story. The last three scenes correspond to and contrast with the first three:

- The dialogue of Scene C1 began with the serpent’s question to the Woman (3:1); and the dialogue of Scene C2 begins with God’s question to the Man (3:9).

⁶ This description is taken from *Men and Women in Christ*, 71 (chapter 5, under ‘Narrative structure’). Some commentators divide scene D from scene C2 at 3:9 rather than 3:8. There is also a debate about whether the first half of 2:4 properly belongs with what precedes it or with what follows it. Precise details of this kind make no difference for our present purposes. Transitions from one narrative element to the next are not always abrupt, so it is not always possible to identify the divisions between elements definitively by naming a single verse number. (If it helps, think of story shapes as analogue rather than digital.)

⁷ Except where stated otherwise, Scripture quotations in English are from the ESV. We use that version here only because of its popularity with complementarians. ESV’s translation of Genesis 3:16 is highly unusual, controversial, and in our view probably mistaken, but for the purposes of this article it is not necessary to examine the details of the translation issues in that verse.

⁸ See Matthew 19:4-5.

- The narrative of Scene B1 ended with references to sexual union and nakedness (2:24-25); and the narrative of Scene B2 ends with references to procreation and clothing (3:20-21).
- In Scene A1 God took Man from the ground and placed him in the garden (2:7-8, 15); and in Scene A2 God expels Man from the garden, to work the ground from which he was taken (3:23).

The argument for man's authority over woman

Mike identifies eight features which have been relied on as showing man's authority over woman or (as he sees it) a husband's authority over his wife. The six with numbers are derived from complementarian scholar Tom Schreiner;⁹ the two that are un-numbered are Mike's additions.

1. God created Adam first, and then created Eve.
2. God gave Adam, not Eve, the command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
3. God created Eve to be a helper for Adam.
- #. Eve is made for Adam.
4. Adam named Eve as 'Woman'.
5. The serpent subverted God's pattern of leadership by tempting Eve rather than Adam.
6. God approached Adam first after the couple had sinned, even though Eve sinned first.
- #. Adam's curse is on all mankind and all the earth whereas Eve's curse is only in relation to women.

Mike rejects two of these. We will briefly notice them before moving on to consider those which he relies on.

He correctly rejects the helper argument (no 3) because it does not show male authority.

The Hebrew word translated as 'helper' (*'ēzer*) does not imply inferiority or being under authority. It is different from the English word, which often carries that connotation. Instead, it carries the idea of strength, so means something like 'strong ally'.¹⁰ The purpose of an *'ēzer* is

⁹ In *Two Views on Women in Ministry*.

¹⁰ Winger correctly points out that it is not appropriate to rely on etymology to establish meaning. The connotation of strength is apparent in actual OT usage. It refers to a military protector in Isaiah 30:5 (where Pharaoh's help will not avail) and in Daniel 11:34 (with 'little' added, diluting the usual force of meaning). It refers to God as 'strength' or 'help' in Exod. 18:4; Deut. 33:7, 26, 29; Ps 20:2; 33:20; 70:5; 89:19; 115:9–11; 121:1–2; 124:8; 146:5; Hos. 13:9. For further discussion, see *Men and Women in Christ*, 76.

to make up for the inadequacy of the one who is helped. Mike correctly observes that there is nowhere in the Bible where this word is used with an inherent implication of subordination.

God is often described as Israel's *'ēzer*, Israel's 'help' or 'strength'. This does not imply that God is under Israel's authority. Similarly, when God makes Woman as a strong ally corresponding to the Man (2:18, 20),¹¹ this does not imply that the Woman is under the Man's authority.

Mike also correctly rejects argument no 5, that the serpent subverted God's pattern of male leadership. For that is not how the story is told. The serpent does not say to the Woman (see 3:1): 'Did *Adam* actually say, "You shall not eat of any tree in the garden"?' He subverts not Adam's authority but God's. When God calls them to account (3:9-19), nothing is said about the Woman flouting the Man's authority, or about the Man failing to exercise authority over her. Their offence is their disobedience to God's command not to eat the fruit (3:11, 13, 17).

The reference in Genesis 3:17 to Adam listening to his wife does not imply that listening to one's wife is wrong in itself. The point is that Adam listened to his wife and ate *instead of obeying God's command*.

Mike relies on the remaining six features as implying a husband's authority. He relies on them not merely as individual points; he also relies on their cumulative effect. So, we will need to consider them both individually and cumulatively.

However, before we proceed further, we must notice that all six features are contrasts between Adam and Eve. We must therefore make sure that we understand what range of meaning the writer intends to convey when he refers to 'Adam' (in Hebrew, *'ādām*).

What 'Adam' stands for

The primary meaning of the Hebrew word *'ādām* is 'man', in the sense of 'humankind', as distinguished from God and from animals. The Genesis writer unmistakably sets out this primary meaning in 1:26-27, as Mike rightly recognizes. God makes humankind (*'ādām*) male and female. (Mike uses the term 'mankind', which means the same as 'humankind'.)¹²

The way the Genesis writer uses this word is a prominent feature of his narrative technique. He uses *'ādām* in three ways: as referring to humankind, as referring to an individual man, and as the personal name of that individual. The writer cleverly narrates the story so that it carries multiple layers of meaning. In parts of the story, on the surface layer, the man is an individual person. Ultimately, *'ādām* becomes a name for him. But there is a prior layer of meaning, in which the man represents humankind, both male and female.

¹¹ See *Men and Women in Christ*, 77, citing Grudem.

¹² In 1:26-27, ESV uses 'man' for this meaning. Since this translation choice is potentially confusing, ESV adds a footnote which explains that it is 'the generic term for mankind'.

The writer is not afraid to use different meanings in close proximity. Consider 5:1-3, with the occurrences of the Hebrew word *'ādām* inserted into the English and numbered:

This is the book of the generations of *'ādām* [1]. When God created *'ādām* [2], he made him in the likeness of God. Male and female he created them, and he blessed them and named them *'ādām* [3] when they were created. When *'ādām* [4] had lived 130 years, he fathered a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth.

[1] is probably the personal name (ESV, 'Adam'). [2] means 'humankind' (ESV, 'man'). [3] is again 'humankind' (ESV, 'Man'). [4] is probably the personal name (ESV, 'Adam').

Translators find it impossible to be sure when to translate *'ādām* as 'man' or 'humankind' and when to translate it as the personal name 'Adam'. For example, where does the personal name 'Adam' first occur in Genesis? There are at least eight different views on this. Is it at 2:16 (Septuagint), 2:19 (AV), 2:20 (ESV, NASB, NIV, NET), 3:17 (RSV), 3:20 (GNT), 3:21 (NEB), 4:1 (CEB), or 4:25 (CSB, NRSV)? There is no 'right' answer.¹³ The reason for this is that the Hebrew writer shows a deliberate intention to communicate more than one layer of meaning. While ultimately identifying the man as an individual named 'Adam', the writer also keeps returning to the significance of *'ādām* as meaning 'humankind'. He is giving the broadest possible hint that he wants us to think about the meaning of the story by understanding the individual man as representing humankind.¹⁴

So, some of what is written about *'ādām* in the Genesis story is for the purpose of telling us about humankind. We should keep that in mind when considering the relationship between Adam and Eve. In order to decide what we should draw from the man's part in the story, and the contrasts with the woman's part, we must attend closely to the shape and content of the text.

As a reminder of this fluidity of meaning, and that the story is not simply about two individuals who ultimately come to be called Adam and Eve, we will spell the words 'Humankind', 'Man', and 'Woman' with initial capital letters.

While Mike rightly recognizes the meaning of *'ādām* as Humankind in 1:26-27, he overlooks that the same meaning is also intended in 3:22-24 (Scene A2). Who is said to be barred from the tree of life and banished from the Garden? On the surface of the story, only *'ādām* (see v22 – *'ādām*; v23 – 'the ground [*'ādāmāh*] from which he was taken'; v24 – *'ādām*). But this scene conveys the banishment of Humankind. The Man here represents Humankind. Even modern

¹³ Some commentators have sought to distinguish the meanings by noticing whether the definite article is used with the word *'ādām*. But this does not work, because of the fluidity of the writer's usage. For example, the article is used in 1:27 but not in 1:26, yet in both cases the appropriate translation is 'man' in the sense of 'humankind'. The article is used in 4:25 but not in 5:3, yet in both cases the personal name is the appropriate translation. See further Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* (Word Biblical Commentary), 32.

¹⁴ Others have said this. For example: Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 32, 'The very indefiniteness of reference may be deliberate. ... Adam, the first man created and named, is representative of humanity ...' There is also another layer of meaning, which Paul flags in Ephesians 5:32. We hope to discuss that in a forthcoming article responding to Mike's Women in Ministry Part 8 video.

readers instinctively understand (and all interpreters agree) that Humankind, both male and female, is banished, not just one individual male person. So, Scene A2, where the *'ādām* is excluded from the Garden, is the reversal of Scene A1, where the *'ādām* was taken from the ground and placed in the Garden.

Going back to Scene A1 (2:4-17), we can now see that everything in that scene carries meaning for Humankind, both male and female. That is exactly what we should expect, because the writer has placed Scene A1 immediately after the seven-day creation story, in which *'ādām* is explained as Humankind (1:26-27), and the writer has not yet given any clear indication that *'ādām* might here have instead an individual sense. (That only comes in Scene B1, with the statement that the *'ādām* is alone (2:18).)

Humankind (*'ādām*) is created by God and placed in the Garden. Humankind is given access to the tree of life (vv 9, 16) and potentially to valuable resources from the earth (v 12). Humankind is given the task of caring for the Garden and is commanded not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (vv 15-17). In Scene A1, the Man represents Humankind.

In 2:16-17 the command concerning the fruit is given only to the *'ādām* (singular).¹⁵ But this conveys that it is given to Humankind, both Man and Woman. This is why later on, without explanation of how it came about, the story shows *the Woman has heard what God has spoken to both of them* (see 3:2 'we' and 3:3 plural 'you' three times). If the command had been only to the Man as an individual, the Woman could not be held responsible and called to account for her disobedience to it (3:13, 16).¹⁶

Man made before Woman (1)

Mike identifies the right question: how would this chronological feature impact original readers? He says that because of the laws of primogeniture (special inheritance rights of the firstborn son) the readers would likely have seen it as a sign of privilege that the Man was made before the Woman. Schreiner's explanation is: "The firstborn male has authority over the younger brothers after the father dies."¹⁷

Mike discusses some egalitarian push back on this, but does not address the most pertinent biblical points:

¹⁵ In 2:16-17 'you' is singular.

¹⁶ It may be objected that this interpretation produces a chronological disjunction: if the Man represents Humankind when the command is given in 2:16-17, then that means that Eve receives the command before she is created in 2.22. But this is not a persuasive objection. The story proceeds on two levels – on the literal or surface level, the Man is an individual person, while on the representative level, the Man represents Humankind, both male and female. The chronology on the two levels does not need to be precisely in step at every point. And in a sense, the Woman is contained within the Man until she is taken out of his side.

¹⁷ In *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, 291.

- The narrative does not make any allusion to ideas of primogeniture (“primo” = “first; “geniture” = birth”). The Man and Woman are not born into an existing human family so as to be competing for inheritance upon their father’s death. They are presented as formed or made by God, not born. They are not siblings in the ordinary sense. They do not have a father who dies. There is nothing in the text that connects with the idea of a firstborn male having authority over younger brothers after their father’s death. On the face of it, primogeniture is of no relevance.
- Nor is this idea picked up elsewhere in the Bible, despite multiple opportunities for doing so. The description ‘firstborn’ is applied to Christ (Rom. 8:29; Col. 1:15, 18; Heb. 1:6; Rev. 1:5), and Christ is sometimes compared with Adam, yet there is no scripture that refers to Adam as the firstborn. A concept of Adam as firstborn (such as would call up ideas of primogeniture) is not found anywhere in Scripture.

Mike offers no evidence to show that Hebrew readers or listeners would have somehow understood a story about creation of a Man from the ground and creation of a Woman from the Man’s side in terms of an eldest son’s privileges of primogeniture.

It is possible that Mike realizes how weak this point is. He tries to buttress it by referring to a complementarian interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12-13. Of course, we should try to understand the Old Testament not only on its own terms but also in light of the New Testament. But Mike here simply assumes that a complementarian interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12-13 is correct. That is a circular argument. Non-complementarians interpret Paul’s words in 1 Timothy 2 quite differently from Mike.

Notice also how carefully Scene B1 is shaped by the writer. It consists of seven steps, arranged in a forward symmetry:

- a1 (v 18) problem: the Man is alone;
 - b1 (v 19) God acts;
 - c1 (v 20a) the Man acts;
- a2 (v 20b) problem: still no helper for the Man;
 - b2 (vv 21–22) God acts;
 - c2 (v 23) the Man acts;
- a3 (vv 24–25) *problem has been solved.*

This narrative shape brings out the significance of Man being created first. After the seven affirmations of the goodness of creation in chapter 1 (vv4, 10, 11, 18, 21, 25 ‘good’, v31 ‘very good’), Scene B1 opens with what seems like a startling contradiction (‘It is not good ...’). The extended narrative of Scene B1 highlights the problem: how desperately alone, incomplete and inadequate the Man is without the Woman. She is God’s final and crowning creation, bringing completion. The Man gets the point and bursts forth in poetry (2:23). A straightforward reading

of Genesis 2 progresses not from male authority to female submission but from human aloneness to the joy and goodness of intimate relationship.

The Man is given God's command not to eat from the tree of knowledge (2)

It is said that the Man, not the Woman, is given God's command not to eat from the tree of knowledge. As an indication of male authority, Mike only awards this feature a 'maybe', though he thinks it is stronger when combined with the further feature that God approaches Adam first after the fall (no 6).

But a 'maybe' is not good enough to establish a supposed implication from the text.

Mike assumes that the Man, having first received God's command, taught it to the Woman.

But the text does not say this.

And Mike simply ignores the features we have explained above – '*ādām* represents Humankind (which includes Woman), to whom the command was given; and the text of 3:2-3 shows that the Woman received God's command.

The Woman's words include:

“God said, ‘You [plural] shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you [plural] touch it, lest you [plural] die”.’

Those words suggest that God had addressed the Man and the Woman together. When did that happen? We can understand it as happening symbolically in 2:16-17 (remembering that '*ādām* represents Humankind) or literally after Woman's creation and before the temptation. Either way, there is nothing in the text which provides positive support for Mike's supposition that the Man taught God's command to the Woman.

Besides, passing on a command does not of itself demonstrate authority to lead. Let's make Mike's assumption that the Man passed on God's command to the Woman. That would not of itself give him authority to lead her, any more than the women passing on Jesus's post-resurrection command to the apostles gave them authority to lead the apostles (Matthew 28:10).

There is no basis in the Genesis text for supposing that the giving of the commands to the Man in 2:15-17 portrays male authority.

Woman made for Man (#)

Mike refers not only to Genesis 2 but also to 1 Corinthians 11:7-10. He thinks that Adam's leadership is implied because Eve is made *for Adam*.

We will examine 1 Corinthians 11 when Mike gets to it in Part 10. For now, we draw attention to the basic flaw in Mike's reasoning. Mike is here making an illogical leap from the Woman's purpose to the Man's authority.

If my son needs to learn French, and I therefore procure a tutor *for him*, the tutor's purpose is clear. But the tutor's purpose (the tutor is *for my son*) does not imply that my son has authority over the tutor. So, if the Man is needy because he is alone, and God makes the Woman *for him*, that does not imply that the Man has authority over the Woman.

Or if my college professor, aware of my need for a reading list, makes one for me, that does not show that I have authority over the reading list; rather, it shows the professor's authority.

That God made the Woman for the Man shows *God's* authority, not the *Man's* authority.

The Man names 'Woman' (4)

Mike regards this as a strong point in favor of his view of male authority. It is easy to see why. God's naming of the light as 'day' and of the darkness as 'night' (1:5) is a clear exercise of God's authority. And it is not unreasonable to view the Man's naming of animals in Scene B1 as an exercise of Humankind's authority over creation (2:19-20, starting to implement 1:26, 28). If the Man gives a generic name to the Woman (2:23), is that not an exercise of authority by the Man over the Woman?

But there are at least four major difficulties with his view.

First, it is evident in Genesis that naming may or may not be an exercise of authority. The significance of naming depends upon the relationship between the namer and the named. When Hagar gives a name to God in Genesis 16:13, there is no implication that Hagar has authority over God or is God's leader. It is an act of discernment, not an exercise of authority. Her naming of God expresses what she has learned about God's nature ('the God who sees me').

If we assume that the Man has authority over the Woman, it would follow that the naming in 2:23 can be understood as an exercise of authority. But if we assume that the Man does not have authority over the Woman, then the naming is not an exercise of authority. Either way, the arguments are circular, unless the nature of the relationship is first identified from somewhere else. On its own, the act of naming cannot tell us whether there is an implication of authority.

It's only when a person is already in a position of authority that naming can be an exercise of authority. This is a general principle, not limited to the book of Genesis. According to Acts

11:26, it was in Antioch that people first ‘called’ (NIV, ESV) or ‘named’ (DRA, WYC) the disciples ‘Christians’. That wasn’t an exercise of authority over the disciples.

Mike mentions Hagar but does not provide an answer to this difficulty for his view.

Second, the writer does not indicate that Man is given dominion over the Woman. On the contrary, he has already made clear that the dominion given to Man is co-rule by men and women over creation (1:26-28). If he meant to qualify that by teaching that women were created to be subordinate to men, he would need to make that clear in chapter 2. Neither God nor the Man say anything in chapter 2 about viewing the Woman as someone to be ruled over.

Mike does not address this difficulty.

Third, we should pay attention to what the narrative of Scene B1 tells us about the significance of what the Man says in 2:23 about the Woman.

The problem is stated in 2:18 – the Man is alone. God’s solution is stated: he will make a helper (a strong ally) corresponding to the Man. (And Mike has correctly acknowledged that to be Man’s helper does not imply subordination of the Woman to the Man.)

The problem is re-stated in verse 20b – no corresponding helper is found – but, after that, the problem is solved through God’s action in making the Woman, who is named by the Man. What the Man recognizes in verse 23 is God’s solution. And the naming expresses what the Man has discerned about the Woman’s nature. So, the story is shaped to highlight both the importance of Woman and the radical contrast between the animals and the Woman. The Man recognizes that she is not like the animals; she is the same as him, his bone and flesh. That contrast tells us that she is not under Humankind’s rule but is a co-ruler of creation, made in God’s image (confirming 1:26-28).

We know what the relationship of Man and Woman is, because verse 18 has told us – she will be the strong ally who corresponds to him. And in verse 23 the Man recognizes that correspondence. If that is the nature of their relationship, there is no implication that she is under his authority.

Because Mike does not pay close attention to the narrative, he does not address this difficulty.

Fourth, we should understand 2:23 with the help of the authoritative explanation which is given in 2:24. In verse 24 our Creator tells us how to understand the significance of verse 23, where the Man recognizes that the Woman, although distinct from him, is his own bone and flesh. The differentiation and similarity of man and woman enable their union to be achieved. As verse 24 says, *therefore* a man and his wife become *one flesh*.

What does that tell us about authority in marriage? The idea of ‘one flesh’ does not convey a hierarchy of one-way authority. Outside the bonds of slavery, an adult human being has authority over their own body. If husband and wife become one flesh, it follows that the wife shares the same authority as the husband over their one flesh. Verses 23-24 therefore convey equality of authority, not the Man’s unilateral authority over the Woman.

Mike does not address this difficulty.

If anyone doubts that this is the significance of 'one flesh', they should consider 1 Corinthians 7:4, where the apostle Paul writes:

'For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.'

Paul has cited Genesis 2:24 a few lines earlier (1 Corinthians 6:16), so it was present to his mind when writing. It is therefore reasonable to infer that Paul, the 'Hebrew of Hebrews' (Philippians 3:5), understood Genesis 2 as teaching equality of authority in marriage.

Paul puts it a little differently, because he is teaching about Christlike conduct in marriage between believers. He has meditated deeply on how life should be lived like Jesus Christ, who did not claim his rights but humbly served others. In line with what he writes elsewhere, Paul wants to emphasize not the exercise of authority but humble service (Romans 12:10; 1 Corinthians 16:15-16; Galatians 5:13; Ephesians 5:21; Philippians 2:3), so he depicts each partner as being equally under the authority of the other.

This one-flesh equality of authority is a death blow to Mike's complementarian teaching that Genesis 2 implies a husband's unilateral authority over his wife.¹⁸ If Genesis 2 should be understood as teaching the husband's sole authority, and if that applies to Christian believers, then how could Paul have written what he did in 1 Corinthians 7:4?¹⁹

At 1hr41m Mike makes a bold and incautious generalization: 'egalitarians generally ignore the New Testament while studying Genesis'. We respectfully remind him that 1 Corinthians 7 is the longest passage in the New Testament concerning marriage and the relations of men and women. Our question to Mike is: why has he ignored 1 Corinthians 7 while studying Genesis?

There is a further naming in 3:20, where for the first time the Woman is named by Adam as 'Eve' (similar in Hebrew to 'Living'), because she would become the mother of all the living. Again, this naming looks like an act of discernment. But, unlike the naming in 2:23, it is after

¹⁸ We use the term 'unilateral' to mean 'one-way-only', so as to distinguish unilateral authority from authority that is joint and mutual.

¹⁹ The traditional answer was to the effect that the husband is head except in bed. As Calvin put it in his Commentary on 1 Corinthians: 'But it may be asked, why the Apostle here puts them on a level, instead of requiring from the wife obedience and subjection. I answer, that it was not his intention to treat of all their duties, but simply of the mutual obligation as to the marriage bed.' But it takes a strong prior commitment to male supremacy not to see the inadequacy of this explanation. Paul adds in v 5: 'Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer'. In vv 3-5 Paul is writing of the couple's sexual relationship and joint prayer life. Physically, a couple's sexual relationship is the most intimate aspect of their marriage. Within a Christian moral framework, it is a foundational element which distinguishes it from other close relationships. Spiritually, their prayers together are at the heart of their marriage. Equality and joint decision-making in these two centrally important matters are inconsistent with a hierarchical relationship. If there is equality, mutual submission and joint decision-making at the physical and spiritual centers of the relationship, it would be strange indeed for there to be an overarching hierarchical relationship in less distinctive or less central matters.

the disobedience. If the naming in 3:20 is an exercise of authority, it is the first example of the male rule that was announced in 3:16.

After the disobedience God approaches the Man first (6)

The Woman disobeys first. But in Genesis 3:9, after the human couple have hidden from God, God calls to the Man and says to him ‘Where are you?’

Mike thinks this implies that Adam is *more responsible* for the fall than Eve – in his view, this is the reason why God calls to Adam first. If Adam is more responsible than Eve, that could imply that he was more guilty. One possible reason for being more guilty would be that he was the leader.

Mike does not explain how he gets his interpretation of this point from the text of Genesis. He does not identify anything specific in the text which supports it. The Genesis text does not say *why* God calls to the Man first.

It appears that Mike gets his idea from the New Testament. He cites Romans 5:19 (‘as by the one man’s disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man’s obedience the many will be made righteous’). He interprets this as meaning that Adam was primarily responsible for the fall, having greater responsibility than Eve. And he thinks that this shows Adam’s authority over Eve.

But Mike’s interpretation does not accurately reflect Paul’s train of reasoning in Romans.

In Romans 5, Paul is not discussing the *relative responsibility* of Adam and of Eve. He says nothing about it. Nor is he discussing relationships in marriage. He refers only to the Man. That is because he is making a comparison between ‘the Man’ in the Genesis story and Jesus Christ.

In the Genesis story ‘*ādām*, representing Humankind, is placed in the Garden. Humankind (*‘ādām*) falls into sin, is called to account, and is expelled. Paul is picking up this idea and using it to explain the work of Christ. He refers to the disobedience of the one man (‘man’ in English = *anthropos* in Greek = *‘ādām* in Hebrew). This represents the disobedience of all humanity. Paul contrasts it with the obedience of the man Jesus Christ, who is the representative of the new humanity who are being made righteous by Jesus.

Representation is not the same thing as leadership. If I say that an ambassador represents the Government of the United States of America, so that the ambassador’s words and actions count as the words and actions of the US Government, I am not implying that the ambassador leads the US Government or has authority over the US Government.

Chapter 5 of Paul's letter to the Romans does not say anything about the relation between Adam and Eve as husband and wife. To misread Adam's *representation of all humanity as implying leadership of his wife*, is an elementary confusion.²⁰

So, why does God call out to the Man first in 3:9? Let's attend again to the shape of the story.

Imagine how the narrative would be understood *if the Man had taken and eaten the fruit first and had given it to the Woman to eat*. The Woman would have appeared to have been a victim and the primary blame would have fallen on the Man.²¹ As it is, since the Woman took the fruit first, it is clear that she is fully responsible for her disobedience.

Now imagine how the narrative would be understood *if the Woman had been interrogated first by God*. Given that the Woman took the fruit first, if she had also been interrogated first, it would have appeared that the Man was a victim and that the primary blame rested on the Woman. As it is, since the Man is interrogated first, it is clear that he is fully responsible for his disobedience.

The order of events, the Woman taking first, the Man being interrogated first, shows that both are fully responsible for their disobedience.

Seen in this light, their excuses (v12, v13) are inadequate; neither of them can evade their responsibility before God.

And we may recall also the representative meaning of *'ādām*, which Paul picks up in Romans 5. After Humankind's disobedience, and attempt to hide from God, God calls out to rebel Humankind: 'Where are you?' In this way, we may see God as seeking out rebel Humankind before calling them to account for their rebellion, as developed in 3:11-13, where the Man and the Woman must each answer to God. God's question – 'Where are you?' – echoes down through the ages to all rebel human beings.

We may also note the possibility that God calls to the Man first because his responsibility is perhaps greater than the Woman's. Not because of any implication of leadership, but simply because the Man's disobedience was deliberate. Unlike the Woman, who was deceived, the Man chose to disobey, with his eyes fully open to what he was doing. This is a possible reading of the text and is consistent with what Paul writes in 1 Timothy 2:14.

In sum, there is much that can be said about God calling to the Man first in Genesis 3:9. But the idea that this is because the Man is in a position of leadership authority lacks any clear basis in the text, whether of Genesis 3 or Romans 5.

²⁰ *Men and Women in Christ*, 80 (chapter 5, under 'Genesis 3 and authoritative headship?'). Paul uses similar reasoning in 1 Corinthians 15:22, 45-49, where the same point applies – Adam's representation of all humanity does not tell us anything about whether he had authority over his wife. Of course, it is possible for an authoritative leader to be a representative. For us, Jesus fulfils both functions. But nothing is said in the Bible about Adam being the authoritative leader either of Eve or of all humanity.

²¹ Henri Blocher, *In the Beginning: The Opening Chapters of Genesis*, 143.

Adam's curse is on all mankind and earth whereas Eve's curse is only in relation to women (#)

Mike refers to Genesis 3:16-19. He says Adam's curse impacts creation while Eve's only impacts women. (Actually, in the text, it is only the serpent and the ground that are directly cursed, see 3:14, 17.) Mike's notes say:

'This implies greater scope of representation or is at least consistent with it. Combined with NT teaching about Adam's weight of responsibility for the fall of mankind I think we have a strong case for greater responsibility in representation, which implies authority to speak for or stand for both of them, which Eve doesn't seem to have. Even DEATH is only pronounced against Adam but includes man and woman in its application. This seems strong to me.'

Mike continues his confusion here, muddling up *representation of someone* with *authority over someone*. When young David slew Goliath as Israel's representative, he did not (yet) have authority over the nation as king – regal authority was still in the hands of Saul. When an athlete competes internationally on behalf of their nation, they represent their nation: if they win, their nation wins, if they lose, their nation loses – but they are not in authority over their nation.

We also need to remember again that *'ādām* represents Humankind. Of course, the curse on the ground, and death itself, apply to *'ādām* and affect all of Humankind. Readers have always understood that the consequences apply to all of Humankind, not to one male or to males generally. 3:19 says: 'By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.' But even though 3:19 is expressed in Hebrew as masculine singular, and in the story it is only the Man who is taken from the ground, no reader would imagine that only the individual Man is being told that work will be hard and he will die. It is not only males who will toil in the fields and return to dust. This is all as we should expect, because of the multiple meanings of *'ādām*. This sufficiently explains the wording of the statements of consequences.

The idea of greater responsibility and greater curse because of male leadership is a superfluous speculation, which cannot be proved from the nature of the curse, and which distorts the representative meaning of *'ādām*, turning representation into leadership. Moreover, male leadership is in conflict with the one-flesh equality of authority.

Cumulative impact

If we are right that all six of Mike's points are mistaken, then their cumulative impact is zero. But we do understand how others see it.

Terran writes in his book about the points that complementarians draw from Genesis 2:

'I know the power of this list: inspired by a sermon series that the then-famous pastor-theologian and mega-church preacher, Mark Driscoll did, I once even preached some of the points on this very list. As a Bible teacher who claims to "teach the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth," I now look back with a fair amount of regret that I was not more thorough on the matter.'²²

The cumulative impact can seem persuasive to someone who is viewing the text through complementarian spectacles.

After all, imagine (as Mike suggests at 1hr29mins) how different the impact would be if on the face of the story the Man and the Woman were made in the same way at the same time, both of them were given the task of caring for the garden and the command about the tree, both of them named the animals, each named the other, and each was said to be made for the other. That would be a strong egalitarian emphasis.

But on the surface the actual story looks emphatically one-sided: the Man is made first, from the ground; the Woman is made from him and for him; he is given the task of caring for the garden and the command about the tree; he names the animals and then the Woman. It seems the Man's part is much more prominent – doesn't this imply that he has a position of authority over her?

However, this perspective starts to unravel as soon as we recall what Mike forgot: the writer's deliberate use of the term *'ādām* with multiple layers of meaning. Since much of what is said about *'ādām* is evidently intended to communicate truths about Humankind (not merely about a male individual), the greater prominence of *'ādām* in Genesis 2 is exactly what we should expect, for that reason. There is no sufficient basis in the text for inferring an additional reason that Eve is under Adam's authority. It is only when we forget that *'ādām* stands for and represents Humankind that we may start to suppose that the prominence of *'ādām* in Genesis 2 somehow implies that the Man has unilateral authority over the Woman.

We might wonder how different the history of interpretation would have been if, from the time of the first translation into English, *'ādām* had been translated consistently (perhaps as Mankind or Earthkind). When reading Genesis, we would have been less likely to forget the collective and representative meanings.

And there is more to say.

Properly understood, a cumulative approach definitively negates the idea that Genesis 2 is teaching Adam's authority over Eve. This is so, even if Mike is right in his understanding of how ancient listeners would have first heard the features in 2:4-23.

²² Terran Williams, *How God Sees Women: The End of Patriarchy*, chapter 4, under 'Genesis 1 – The King and Queen of Creation'.

For the sake of argument, let us suppose that on hearing Genesis 2:4-23 the first listeners might readily start to think that the point of the story is about Adam's leadership authority as husband over Eve as his wife.

The first listeners lived in an ancient patriarchal society. By 'patriarchal' we mean that men were in charge and held property. Marriage was structured accordingly. Part of the patriarchal system was that marriage was 'patrilocal', meaning that upon marriage *the woman left her family* and joined the husband's family group, which was headed by the senior living male ancestor.²³

We need to ask ourselves: what would be the rhetorical impact on that audience when the theological conclusion comes in 2:24?

What kind of conclusion ('Therefore ...') would the listeners be expecting? If Mike is right, it would follow that the listeners are expecting something like 'Therefore a man has authority over his wife' or 'Therefore a woman should be subject to her husband' or 'Therefore a woman leaves her father's house and joins her husband's family'. But what do they hear? Their Creator says: 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.'

Thud! If they are listening carefully, their patriarchal expectations would be shattered. The divine explanation of the Genesis 2 story involves nothing at all about male authority; it involves *a man leaving* his father and mother, and *the unity of man and wife as one flesh*. Patriarchal authority is not affirmed. The patrilocal pattern is rejected. The man and wife become one flesh. This authoritative word brings into sharp focus the equal partnership that was already depicted in Genesis 1:27-28. God's prescription for marriage is quite different from a patriarchal expectation.

Mike discusses the significance of the man leaving his father and mother (0hr29mins). He correctly says that the new relationship of marriage takes priority over the pre-existing relationship with parents, but he misses the significance of the rejection of the patrilocal pattern.

If the text had said 'Therefore *a woman* shall leave her father and her mother and hold fast to her husband', the first listeners or readers would not have seen any challenge to the patrilocal pattern which was part of the patriarchal system. And they would certainly not have understood that the new relationship is to take priority. Their reaction would be: 'Of course the woman leaves, everyone knows that!'. By saying that *the man leaves*, our Creator is teaching the two lessons: both (1) the original non-patriarchal pattern for marriage before the

²³ In ancient Israel, consistent with the general pattern of ancient Semitic culture, the smallest unit of kinship was the father's house (*bê't- 'āb*). 'It consisted of all those living within the household of a single living male ancestor, who was known as the 'head of a father's house'. It would thus include his wife or wives, his sons and their wives and their sons and wives and unmarried daughters. ...' Christopher J. H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (IVP, 2004), 338-339.

disobedience in chapter 3, and (2) the priority of the marriage relationship over the relationship with parents.

The institution of male rule

Was unilateral male rule already present in chapter 2 before the disobedience or is 3:16 ('he shall rule over you') its first appearance?

Because of Mike's mistaken view of the six features discussed above, he concludes that it is already present before the disobedience. He believes that the male rule in 3:16 is an unseemly battle between husband and wife over who will rule, which involves a distortion of the prior benevolent male authority which existed in Genesis 2.

Complementarians propose various controversial translations or interpretations of 3:16 to make it consistent with unique male authority being already present in God's design in chapter 2. Mike's main contribution to this effort is an explanation of what he calls the 'curse theme' in Genesis 3. He characterizes this theme as 'that good things will become more difficult rather than the idea that new, bad things, are now to be instituted'. Thus, farming is good, but will be harder; childbirth is good, but will be harder; 'marriage roles' are good, but will be harder.

But this explanation provides no real support for his view. All it tells us is that the relationship of man and wife, which is a good thing, becomes harder. It does not tell us whether what Mike calls the Genesis 2 'marriage roles', before they become harder in Genesis 3, consist of the husband's authoritative leadership and the wife's submission (as complementarians say) or whether they comprise an equal partnership, with equal authority and mutual submission (as egalitarians say).

Moreover, Mike does not explain why the text is as it is. Because male rule has not been mentioned before, the plain meaning of the text of 3:16 appears to be that *male rule is an adverse consequence of the disobedience*.

The meaning of the word 'mashal' in 3:16 is — as Mike teaches in his video — 'rule'. We are thankful for Mike's admission on this point, since some complementarian scholars argue that it means 'oppress' or 'rule harshly'. Rather, in its 81 occurrences in the Old Testament, it means reign, rule, govern, master, or lead. In Genesis, for example, the sun is said to 'mashal' the night and day, and Joseph is said to 'mashal' Egypt. Major biblical Hebrew dictionaries (HALOT and BDB) list not a single negative meaning for it. Its core semantic concept does not include oppression or tyranny. To express that meaning, words have to be added, such as 'harshly'.

No such word is added here. So, it is the rule of the Man over the Woman that is identified in 3:16 as a consequence of the disobedience, not harsh rule of Man over Woman.

Mike cannot accept that plain conclusion, because of his belief that male rule is portrayed by implication in Genesis 2, before the disobedience. He must therefore find some other meaning

for the last sentence of Genesis 3:16 (NASB: 'Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you'). He argues that this describes a situation of conflict, in which the wife tries to control the husband but the husband rules over her (2hr0mins).

The nature of the Woman's 'desire' in 3:16 is much debated by scholars. There is a complex discussion, which considers how the same Hebrew word is used in Genesis 4:7 and in Song of Songs 7:10. One view is that it refers to the Woman's desire for intimacy with her husband. After the disobedience this desire will continue, but with mixed results, because pregnancy and childbirth will be painful toil and the husband will be no longer an equal partner but rather a ruler.

To keep things simple, let us assume that Mike is right to understand the Woman's 'desire' to be a desire not for intimacy but for control. Mike contends that the Man already ruled the Woman in Genesis 2, and after the disobedience it has become more difficult for the Man to do so (as his notes say: 'the curse is in it being more difficult').

But the text does not say that it is more difficult. The text does not say that there was already male rule before the disobedience. Even if Mike's interpretation of the Woman's desire is correct, it does not help to establish that Mike's reading of Genesis 2 is correct.

In several later videos, Mike relies on some expositions of Scripture by John Chrysostom, who became archbishop of Constantinople around the end of the fourth century AD. Chrysostom was a vocal advocate for men's rule over women.

We agree with Mike on the value of giving careful attention to what Chrysostom says. While he must be understood in relation to his own time and context, he often has useful insights and adds much to our understanding of Scripture.

On the question of whether male rule was instituted in Genesis 2 or in Genesis 3, Chrysostom is clear. Despite his support for male rule in the circumstances of a fallen world, he teaches that this was not God's original design for men and women: it was a consequence of the disobedience. He regards it as reasonable for the Woman to be subjected to the Man only because of the fall. Before the disobedience, the Woman was not under the Man's authority:

'Wherefore, you see, she was not subjected as soon as she was made; nor, when He brought her to the man, did either she hear any such thing from God, nor did the man say any such word to her: he said indeed that she was 'bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh' (Gen. ii. 23): but of rule or subjection he no where made mention unto her.'²⁴

In contrast with Mike's view, Chrysostom understands Man and Woman in Genesis 2 to be created with equal 'preeminent authority'; Woman was not under Man's authority.²⁵

²⁴ Chrysostom, *1 Corinthians*, Homily 26. Chrysostom here explains Genesis 3:16 (Woman's desire and Man's rule) as a measure to restrain the 'warfare' between Man and Woman after the disobedience.

²⁵ See also his Homilies on *Genesis*, Homily 14, Homily 16 and Homily 17, where he repeatedly teaches the Woman's original equality with the Man, including in 'status', 'esteem', and 'preeminent authority'. In his Homily 17 on *Genesis*, Chrysostom explained the institution of male rule after the disobedience in this way:

Male rule *versus* one flesh

Unilateral male rule is a distortion of God's one-flesh design in Genesis 2.

This can be vividly illustrated by an historical example from the common law (the main source of the legal systems both of England and of the United States).

An ancient maxim of the common law was that 'husband and wife are one person in law'. This was explicitly derived from Genesis 2:24.

If the husband and wife are *one person* in law, it would seem obvious that *they have equal legal powers over themselves and their property*. But that was not how the maxim was put into effect.

Male judges appealed to the husband's rule in Genesis 3:16, to produce a radically different result. A 17th century judge put it like this:

'... after the Fall, the judgment of God upon woman was, "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, for thy will shall be subject to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Gen. iii, 16). Hereupon our law put the wife *sub potestate viri* [under the power of the husband], ...'

A famous jurist summarized how this combination of one flesh and male rule worked out:

'By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law; that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband.'

In other words, man and wife are one, but the man is now ... the one!²⁶

This ancient judicial incongruity – now rightly overthrown in most modern legal systems – demonstrates how the imposition of unilateral authority wrecks the true meaning of 'one flesh' in Genesis 2:24. The woman's personhood is subordinated to and subsumed in the man's.

“*Your yearning will be for your husband, and he will be your master.*” As if to explain his reasons to the woman, the loving God said this, meaning, In the beginning I created you equal in esteem to your husband, and my intention was that in everything you would share with him as an equal, and as I entrusted control of everything to your husband, so did I to you; but you abused your equality of status. Hence I subject you to your husband: “*Your yearning will be for your husband, and he will be your master.*” Because you abandoned your equal, who was sharer with you in the same nature and for whom you were created, and you chose to enter into conversation with that evil created the serpent, and to take the advice he had to give, accordingly I now subject you to him in future and designate him as your master for you to recognize his lordship, and since you did not know how to rule, learn well how to be ruled. “*Your yearning will be for your husband, and he will be your master.*” It is better that you be subject to him and fall under his lordship than that enjoying freedom and authority, you would be cast into the abyss. It would be more useful also for a horse to carry the bit and travel under direction than without this to fall down a cliff. Accordingly, considering what is advantageous, I want you to have yearning for him and, like a body being directed by its head, to recognize his lordship pleurably.’

²⁶ See G. Williams, ‘The Legal Unity of Husband and Wife’, *Modern Law Review*, January 1947, 16-18.

The complementarian insistence on one-way male authority stands in stark opposition to God's design for marriage. What is happening here is that complementarians are upholding one half of 1 Corinthians 7:4 ('the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does') and canceling the other half ('Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does').

In the sixteenth century, John Knox taught that it was men's duty to enforce against women the curse of Genesis 3:16. But Jesus Christ came to overcome the effects of humankind's disobedience. Christian believers should not be perpetuating them. Even complementarian scholar Wayne Grudem concurs:

'we are never to try to increase or perpetuate the results of the curse. We should never try to promote Genesis 3:16 as something good!' (emphasis original)²⁷

Mike correctly understands that the work of Christ overcomes the curse. He agrees it is good to alleviate the adverse consequences of the disobedience, whether painful toil in childbirth or fields, or death itself. He understands that we are not called to work *against* the victory that Christ has achieved but rather to work with him in implementing it.

It was chiefly in this area of implementation that Chrysostom fell short. Of course, he understood in general the significance of the work of Christ in overcoming the curse, but, steeped as he was in a strongly patriarchal culture, he failed to see its full application to the relations between men and women. Had he done so, he might have become an advocate for women's equality of authority with men, in harmony with his understanding of God's design for men and women in Genesis 2.²⁸

²⁷ Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth: an analysis of 118 disputed questions* (IVP, 2005), 40.

²⁸ Quite apart from his general support for male rule, the impact of patriarchal culture on Chrysostom's understanding of Scripture is apparent also in omissions and inconsistencies. His Commentary on Galatians contains a notable example of an omission. In Galatians 3:28, Paul writes that there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for all are one in Christ Jesus. Chrysostom has something to say about 'Greek', 'Jew' and 'slave' displaying Christ in their own person, but has nothing to say about 'female'! We have noted above that in his Homilies on *Genesis* he is clear as to Woman's original equality and the institution of Man's authority over Woman only after the fall. Yet there are some places where, inconsistently, he seems to imagine such authority prior to the fall (as in Homily 17, in his discussion of Adam's excuse in Genesis 3:12). There is similar inconsistency in his view of women's ministry. His understanding of early Christian history is that in apostolic times, unlike his own time, women were preachers and teachers of the word. In Homily 73 on Matthew 23:14 he contrasts the women of his own day with New Testament women who, without bringing evil report upon themselves, 'went about with the apostles, having taken unto themselves manly courage, Priscilla, Persis, and the rest; . . . even travelling into far countries. . . . [T]he business of those women was to spread the word.' He affirms the ministries of New Testament women, including the great achievements of Junia as an apostle (see his Homily 31 on Romans), while inconsistently he regards the women of his own time as lacking competence for preaching and teaching ministries.

Mike is not bound by the same powerful cultural blinders which hampered John Chrysostom. If he were to follow Chrysostom's understanding of Genesis 2, might that transform his perception of how God sees women?

Mike thinks that his interpretation of Genesis 2 is consistent with the New Testament, where wives are instructed that it is God's will for them to submit to husbands. He thinks egalitarians wrongly see women's submission as part of the curse to be overturned.

But that misrepresents the biblical egalitarian understanding. It is not submission that is wrong. It is men's one-way-only rule over women that should not be perpetuated.

Referring to Ephesians 5, Mike says that the way to deal with the curse is through the self-sacrificial love of the husband and the voluntary submission of the wife (2hr05mins). Amen! This is the way of Christ.

We respectfully point out that self-sacrificial love is something very different from authoritative rule. Self-sacrificial love is not an exercise of authority over another person.

Creation and new creation

We have seen that Mike's conclusion about a husband's authority in Genesis 2 is not soundly based. However, even if it were correct, we wonder why he regards it as a significant building block for his view on restricting women's ministry.

Early on in his video, Mike refers to Genesis 1 – 3 as 'foundational'. We agree. But it is important to be clear: foundational to what? Consideration of the place of men and women in God's first creation does not settle questions about new life in Christ. It would be wrong to assume that a conclusion about features of marriage in the first creation must necessarily determine the proper conduct for married Christian believers or impact on the exercise of spiritual ministries by women.

We are not living either in Genesis 3 or in Genesis 2, but after the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and after the gift of the Holy Spirit, and in anticipation of Christ's return and of the general resurrection. The first creation is passing away (1 Corinthians 7:31). Human marriage will not have a place in the new creation (Matthew 22:30). Christian believers are called to live a kingdom life of self-sacrificial love in this present world, in anticipation of the fullness of the new creation where 'male and female' will not have the same significance as at present (Galatians 1:4; 3:28-29; 5:14, 22-23; 6:15). The foundation for understanding women's ministry is the new creation begun at the resurrection, and in particular the gifts of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:17-21, etc).

There is no road back to Eden. The purpose of redemption in Christ goes forwards, not backwards. The end is portrayed not as a Garden where God walks but as a City where God rules (Revelation 21-22).

We must go beyond the question ‘How did God order the first creation before the fall?’ and ask also ‘What is God’s final purpose for human beings redeemed in Christ?’ and ‘In the light of that purpose, how are we to live now?’

Even if Mike had successfully demonstrated that Chrysostom was wrong about Genesis 2, so that Genesis 2 presents one-way male authority as God’s original design in the first creation, it would still need to be separately established that this model is intended to be adhered to in a Christian marriage lived in anticipation of the new creation, and that it is somehow relevant to women’s exercise of spiritual ministries. Our answers must finally depend not on how we read Genesis 2, but on how we read the relevant New Testament texts.

Conclusion

Mike’s central conclusion from his consideration of Genesis 1 – 3 is that unilateral male authority is built into marriage by God from the creation, before the fall. While this is not anywhere *stated* in the text, he believes that it is *implied*.

To base a doctrine on supposed implications from the text is a hazardous procedure. But we can be more definite than that. We can say positively that his conclusion rests on shallow mis-readings of the text.

In brief:

- He fails to consider the narrative technique and narrative structure of Genesis 2 – 3.
- Although he correctly recognizes that in Genesis 1 *’ādām* refers to Humankind, both male and female, he mistakenly ignores this meaning in his reading of Genesis 2 – 3.
- He assumes that the Woman is given God’s command by the Man, but there is no indication of this in the text.
- He confuses purpose with authority.
- He fails to pay attention to the longest passage in the New Testament on marriage and the relations of men and women (1 Corinthians 7), which rules out his interpretation of the Man’s naming of Woman.
- He misreads Romans 5, muddling together Adam’s representation of all Humankind with Adam’s supposed authority over his wife.
- He misses the full significance of the Creator’s authoritative word of explanation in Genesis 2:24.
- Because he misreads Genesis 2, he does not see that Genesis 3:16 portrays the beginning of male rule, after the disobedience in the garden.

His conclusion is in conflict with careful interpretation of Scripture.

Even John Chrysostom, imbued as he was with a strongly patriarchal culture, saw that the authority imbalance between men and women was not introduced at creation but in Genesis 3, after the disobedience.

Moreover, a new day dawns when Jesus rises from the dead. The shame and curse are undone. The one-sided rule of men over women is taken away in Christ. He chooses a woman to be the first witness and herald of the resurrection, trusted to carry the life-giving message to the sons of Adam. Women will stand shoulder to shoulder with men on the frontlines of the mission and rule of God.

Going forward, we will need to consider the questions about women in ministry not as questions about creation, but questions about the life of the new creation in the age of the Spirit, in anticipation of the consummation that will come when Jesus our Lord returns.

Short postscript on ‘roles’

In Mike’s written notes for Part 2, he uses the term ‘role’ 21 times. He uses it even more in the video. But Mike has failed to recognize that it comes from secular sociology, not from the Bible.

In his Part 1 video ‘Why We Can’t Think Biblically About It’, Mike identified what he called seven ‘huge mistakes’ that people make in the way they approach the question of Women in Ministry. Disappointingly, he overlooked a number of mistakes which he himself has made, including the mistake of importing the secular sociological concept of roles into Bible exposition in places where it does not belong. Throughout his series, he repeatedly uses this term.

The Bible does not contain any word that means ‘role’ and it does not employ that concept. It was imported into Bible interpretation in North America in the 1970s by George Knight III. It quickly became a key ingredient in complementarian interpretations of the Bible.

So, we need to realize that much of Mike’s exposition of Genesis is framed in terms of a sociological concept which is absent from Scripture, and so was not in the mind of the writer.

If his exposition requires him to make frequent use of a concept which is absent from Scripture, that is a red flag. It warns us to be cautious about what Mike says on this topic. To understand Scripture correctly, we need to think biblically.

Genesis 1 – 3 says nothing about God assigning to men and women distinctive ‘roles’ to perform. Instead, men and women are differentiated in their creation: *created* male and female. To be male or to be female are not roles which we have to choose to perform or to work at performing. Sexual difference is a God-given, created fact of life.

For Woman to be a ‘helper’ or ‘strong ally’ as meant in Genesis 2 is not a ‘role’ in the sociological sense, for it is not a temporary assignment or a chosen task; the writer’s point is that Woman is made by God to be complementary to Man – that is her created nature. She is

not *instructed* by God to be a strong ally corresponding to him; instead, that is what God *makes* her. And a woman's ability to bear children is not a feminine role, it is a created, biological fact.

<https://terranwilliams.com/what-winger-gets-wrong-with-genesis-1-3/>