

FINDING VALUE IN A COUNTERFEIT WORLD: A BIBLICAL EVALUATION OF
FEMINISM

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ABSTRACT

Feminism is one of the most influential social justice movements today. It has exposed many terrible abuse cases toward women that were motivated by wicked intentions. However, while responding to abuse, the movement brought its own ideologies, some of which are more harmful than helpful. Many of these ideas and practices lead people away from God's Word, which is the only source where people will find genuine value. This thesis seeks to give a biblical evaluation of certain aspects of Feminism while proving that only identity in Jesus Christ can offer the value that Feminism seeks.

INTRODUCTION

Imagine a person in a marketplace looking for a treasured product. This person has to sift through what is an actual treasure and what is a worthless counterfeit. The same can be said for people in the marketplace of ideas. A young lady is desperately looking to replace something that someone else had stolen from her—someone she loved and trusted dearly. She finds a crowd gathered around a vender offering the product that so many have been searching for—the very thing that so many of these women have lost. The product appears to be value. However, the vender does not share with these poor consumers that this is really hopelessness covered in a thin veneer of value. It looks and sounds wonderful, but it is not what it claims to be on the inside. However, another vender down the way offers the very thing they are looking for and gives it for free. In many ways, Feminism is a response to violence and abuse within patriarchal systems. The movement seeks to restore value to many women who feel valueless. Although this movement has honorable aspects, it will inevitably leave women waiting for a promise that cannot be fulfilled. However, identity in Christ truly offers the value that Feminism seeks.

THEORY

Patriarchy

Before one can discuss Feminism and discuss its goals, it is appropriate to identify the force that created such a movement seeking to fill the void of unmet needs. Bell Hooks, an influential author within the Feminist movement, shared her own experience of her “father's domination of everyone in [her] household. A military man, an athlete, a Deacon of the church, a provider, and a womanizer, he was the embodiment of patriarchal rule. [She] witnessed [her] mother's pain”¹ caused by her father’s actions. Hooks’ tragic story, in many ways, is a representative of many other women who have been abused and mistreated by men, with whom they have a close relationship. There are many other cases where the mistreatment extends far beyond close relationships. Much of this mistreatment is because of the inappropriate or even wicked use of power these men have in their positions.

Many have identified patriarchy² as the source of abuse. “A patriarchy is a system or social organization where males hold the primary positions of power in society.”³ In these patriarchal systems, many men can easily abuse and mistreat women because of their power.

1. Bell Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody: Passionate Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 100–101.

2. Although the definition of patriarchy can be viewed neutrally, for the sake of this paper, patriarchy is understood as “another way of naming institutionalized sexism” (Hooks, ix) because this is the way it is understood within the movement of Feminism.

3. Michelle Denton, *Feminism and Gender Equality* (New York: Cavendish Square, 2020), 6.

Some have concluded that mistreatment breeds even more mistreatment: “Because of a lack of respect⁴ elsewhere... men⁵... value a measure of subservience and submission from women that is intended to make up for what they can’t receive in the wider world.”⁶ Men who demand respect through oppression, force, and coercion abuse women, leaving them battered and bruised mentally, physically, and spiritually—in a state that very clearly is unvalued and unappreciated.

Feminism: A Reaction

“The dictionary definition of Feminism is ‘the theory of the political, economic, and social equality of the sexes.’”⁷ This definition is clear and broad enough for most people to agree with. Notice that it presumes that inequality exists between men and women in some form or

4. Many would agree that men are seeking respect, however, it seems that the author of this quote identifies a direct relationship between respect and subservience and submission. Is this necessarily the case? I think it is certainly true that when a woman respects her husband, she naturally submits to him. However, it is *because* she respects him—she trusts that he will care, cherish, and provide. She recognizes that he is different from her, but that the difference between them is good, God-pleasing, and for her benefit. The Bible does teach that wives should submit and respect their husbands (Eph 5), but the world’s definition submit is significantly different than Christian submission. First and foremost, a woman respects her husband and submits to him because of her relationship with God; because of her identity as a daughter of Christ. This is what God’s people naturally do—they serve God out of thanksgiving by doing what he says. However, it is probably good to note the dynamic between respect and submission. Although they accompany one another, they are not equivalent to each other. For Christians, submission comes out of respect. The inverse is not true, and that may be where many men are wrong. When they sense the lack of respect, they force submission, hoping they will receive respect. However, the reality is that if a man wants respect, in many cases, he should look at himself. How are his words, actions, even thoughts towards women, especially towards his wife? If he is hateful, rude, or unloving towards her, why would she respect him? This is not the way Christ loves the church. Respect and submission are the natural response to loving behavior resembling God’s love for the church. Submission out of force or coercion is a response to fear. It is true that people are sinful and will respond sinfully even if everything is done right. However, in many cases, sinful reactions can be a response to sinful treatment, and it is certainly much easier to submit to someone when you know that their intentions are all for your good; when the relationship resembles that of Christ and his bride.

5. This author explicitly applies this to men in high crime-rate and low-income places.

6. Mikki Kendal, *Hood Feminism: Notes From the Women That a Movement Forgot* (New York: Viking, 2020), 70.

7. Denton, *Feminism and Gender Equality*, 5.

another. However, it does not explain how the inequality manifests. The definition does not reveal how many “see stories on the news about men beating up their wives, and people... say[ing] things like, that's what she deserves.”⁸ Personal experiences give context to the dictionary definition and reveals the desire of equality many women are seeking. “My own conversion to feminist thinking in my teenage years was in direct response to my father's domination of everyone in our household.... I witnessed my mother's pain, and I rebelled. Mama never expressed anger or rage at gender injustice, no matter how extreme dad’s humiliation of her or his violence.”⁹ Feminism is a response to sexism¹⁰ and misogyny,¹¹ which so many have experienced within patriarchal systems.¹² The equality that many are seeking is equality in value between men and women.

Like many other reactions to inequality and mistreatment, Feminism began with broad generalizations. The movement was headed in a direction without clarity, perhaps out of a desperate hope for immediate alleviation. “There was indeed a great deal of anti-male sentiment among early feminist activists who were responding to male domination with anger. It was that

8. June Eric-Udorie, *Can We All Be Feminists?: New Writing from Brit Bennet, Nicole Dennis-Benn, and 15 Others on Intersectionality, Identity, and the Way Forward for Feminism* (New York: Penguin Books, 2018), ix. Consider the assumption made by one who says something like this. There is no searching for context. Simply the conclusion was made that the woman was at fault.

9. Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody*, 100–101.

10. “Sexism is prejudice, or nonfactual negative beliefs, and discrimination against someone because of their gender, and in most cases, it refers to a prejudice and discrimination against women. . . Feminist would say that patriarchy is inherently sexist because it requires prejudice against women to maintain a male-dominated power structure” (Denton, 7).

11. “Misogyny is the hatred towards women” (Denton, 7).

12. “Sexism is the ideology that supports patriarchal social relations, but misogyny enforces it when there is a threat of that system going away” (Denton, 8).

anger at injustice that was the impetus for creating a women’s liberation movement.”¹³ From this emerged groups with extreme theories and applications. “Materialist Feminists were concerned with how patriarchy and capitalism act together to constrain women.... Radical Feminists foregrounded patriarchy and viewed women and men as oppressed and oppressor classes. They are revolutionaries who aimed to remake society, dismantle the concept of gender (but not sex), and overthrow patriarchy and capitalism.”¹⁴ Out of a desperate need for relief from abuse, it is easy for people to act extremely. For many, it led them to question, even hate, something they once loved.

Materialist and radical Feminism is extreme and even influential. However, they are not representative of the whole and they have unjustly become the most thought of, making the movement for many a caricature that is not taken seriously. The “word feminist is so heavy with baggage, negative baggage: you hate men, you hate bras, you hate.... you think women should always be in charge, you don't wear make-up, you don't shave, you are always angry, you don't have a sense of humour, you don't use deodorant.”¹⁵ These perceptions can create an environment where some are unwilling to listen: “I objected to the behavior of a man, only to be told that the incidents hadn’t happened at all as I said, that I was subjective, delusional, overwrought, dishonest—in a nutshell, female.”¹⁶ When people generalize feminists as “women

13. “Women came to the movement from relationships where men were cruel, unkind, violent, unfaithful... Individual women came from these relationships angry” (Hooks, 67).

14. Helen Pluckrose and James Lindsey, *Cynical Theories: How Activist Scholarship Made Everything about Race, Gender, and Identity—and Why This Harms Everybody*, (Durham: Pitchstone Publishing, 2020), 137.

15. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists*, (New York: Anchor Books, 2015), 11.

16. Rebecca Solnit, *Men Explain Things to Me*, (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2014), 7.

who are unhappy because they cannot find husbands,”¹⁷ the genuine problems that many women are suffering from are not taken seriously.

“As the movement progressed, as feminist thinking advanced, enlightened feminist activists saw that men were not the problem, that the problem was patriarchy, sexism, and male domination.”¹⁸ Feminism “isn’t about being anti-male.”¹⁹ Many have observed:

Not all masculinity is toxic; Many traditionally masculine traits can be positive. . . . contrary to popular opinion, most feminists don't think men or masculinity are evil. In fact, seeing men as inherently evil takes any responsibility for their actions away from them; It makes it seem as though men who are abusive or sexist can't help themselves, when in reality, they are making conscious choices to behave poorly.²⁰

Furthermore, “Females can be just as sexist as men. And while that does not excuse or justify male domination, it does mean that it would be naive and wrong-minded for feminist thinkers to see the movement as simplistically being for women against men.”²¹ Today, many feminists have identified that “the problem is sexism,”²² and they are “seeking to improve the lives of just over half the population of Earth, Feminism has been, for well over a century, one of the most significant social movements in human history.”²³ “Simply put, Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression. . . . To understand feminism, it implies one has to

17. Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists*, 9.

18. Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody*, 67.

19. Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody*, viii.

20. Denton, *Feminism and Gender Equality*, 23. Phrases like “boys will be boys” come from this kind of mentality, which easily can become an excuse for men to act inappropriately.

21. Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody*, viii–ix.

22. Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody*, viii.

23. Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 135.

necessarily understand sexism.”²⁴ Many people claim, “we are all participants in perpetuating sexism until we change our minds and hearts; until we let go of sexist thought and action and replace it with feminist thought and action.”²⁵

A Quest for Equality

“There are slightly more women than men in the world – 52 per cent of the world population is female, but most of the positions of power and prestige are occupied by men.”²⁶ The late Kenyan Nobel Peace laureate, Wangari Maathai, put it simply and well when she said, the higher you go, the fewer women there are.”²⁷ If one reads this quote with even the slightest of knowledge that there have been instances when women were passed over from positions like these, even though they are equally qualified, one cannot help but sense the problem of inequality. Inequality in the workplace is just one example of the problem, and it can reach into every aspect of a woman’s life.

As a response, “Feminists want everyone to have the same access to opportunities and human rights. This concept is also known as gender equality. Feminists focus on gender—and particularly women—because they believe most cultures have oppressed women... by taking away their rights and opportunities throughout most of history.”²⁸

24. Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody*, 1.

25. Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody*, ix.

26. Statistic from 2022

27. Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists*, 17.

28. Denton, *Feminism and Gender Equality*, 5.

In the interviews conducted for this paper, participants shared their thoughts when asked to respond to this statement: Everyone should have the same access to opportunities and human rights. Interviewee one responded, “Yes, I agree...but not everyone is going to be prepared to succeed in the same way, nor is everyone going to be able to take advantage of all these opportunities in the same way.... So, yes, everyone should have the same access to opportunities, but that is not the same as succeeding at the opportunities.”²⁹ This participant’s response reflects the thoughts of many other Christians. “Gender equality” can be understood in a way that is not contrary to Scripture. Although gender equality certainly has value and can be understood in a God-pleasing way, it can also easily be taken too far and applied inappropriately.

The fullest expression of Christian ethics is submission; this is what all Christians are ultimately called to do.... So, the statement: ‘everyone should have the same access to opportunities and human rights,’ this is a feminist extension of a general principle of human rights that all people have human rights—all humans, by virtue of being humans, have these things called rights. And I think we can understand that statement pragmatically. But theologically, I don't know what that statement means whatsoever. So, if you're going to ask me what I'm going to do politically because I think pragmatically, as far as civic righteousness goes, what is going to be most useful for my country, for the neighborhood that I live in? That's one thing. But if you're asking what does Scripture teach, should everyone have the same access to opportunities and human rights? Well, it never says that anywhere, other than general principles of justice for all people that we find in the Old Testament—judges ought to be just. But what it does say is the exact opposite, that all Christians are called into a life of submission and service.³⁰

After their response, the interviewees were informed that this quote was taken from a context supporting Feminism ideology and that many Feminists claim that the Bible is against gender equality³¹ because of its guidance for how men and women are to use their gifts. They were then given a chance to respond to this thought.

29. Interviewee 1. The participants interviewed for this thesis will remain anonymous. They will be distinguished by numbers throughout the paper.

30. Interviewee 7.

31. Discussed in the “Practice” section.

All participants disagreed. One of them said, “We see women in the Bible doing way more culturally than the secular world around them would have let them do. So, historically speaking, I think the Bible is very much open to this idea.” One can make the argument that when it is appropriate for everyone to have the same access to opportunities, the Bible is not against it. A read through Scripture while understanding its context would be sufficient enough to make the case. There certainly are many instances when equal access to opportunity is wonderful. However, whether or not it is appropriate for everyone to have the same access to *everything* is another issue.

Our theology teaches very clearly a form of complementarianism. Scripture clearly teaches that men and women, are essentially, of equal value in God's eyes. But what it means to be one of God's creations is not that you are free to define yourself in whatever way you want to pursue whatever form of happiness you want. But rather, you've been created to serve God in the roles that he's designed for you.³²

Another interviewee had this to add: “Although it is a wonderful blessing in the one kingdom, my life in God’s Kingdom is not about the same access to human rights. Rather, it is about being a child of God, which is something everyone has equal access to through Christ.”³³ She went on to explain the biblical teaching of equality. “We are equal in God’s sight, but we are not the same. Equality does not necessarily mean the same. Equal in value does not mean the same. Equal in purpose does not mean the same. God did not create Adam and then say, ‘Ditto for Eve.’ He created a team that is equal in value yet diverse and unique.”³⁴

“Feminism's main goal is to achieve gender equality, but gaining equality is a process that will take many years. There are many issues to be tackled before sexism and misogyny

32. Interviewee 7.

33. Interviewee 4.

34. Interviewee 4.

disappear. However, feminists keep an ideal future in mind—one where everyone is truly equal regardless of who they are.”³⁵ Many feminists claim, “the equality that so many people are seeing existing between women and men is an illusion.”³⁶ So, the movement pushes “to find the way back [to equality]—to recognize Feminism for what it is: one of the most vital social justice movements of our age.”³⁷ Feminism’s search for equality is understandable and many aspects of the movement are even seen as good and worthy goals by Christians. However, it seems that an attempt to avoid one evil has pushed many into another evil.

35. Denton, *Feminism and Gender Equality*, 77.

36. Kat Banyard, *Equality Illusion: The Truth about Women and Men Today*, (London: Faber & Faber, 2011), 2.

37. Banyard, *Equality Illusion*, 2.

PRACTICE

Action Plan

Feminism emphasizes gender equality, theorizing that when men and women are equal, value will be restored to women. However, theorizing is not enough. Another significant component of Feminism is its methodology for obtaining equality and, subsequently, the value that accompanies it. For feminists, to “bring an end to patriarchy and sexism,”³⁸ there must be action.

In many places, women have been running their households because of the circumstances in their community. “Women were largely in charge not because they had fought to be, but because the men in their lives and communities were being imprisoned or killed with little rhyme or reason.”³⁹ In instances like these,⁴⁰ feminists see that women have the capability to run their own homes and to make all the decisions without the help of a male. Although these cases are not ideal, for many feminists, they demonstrate the ability of a woman, proving that, in many respects, women are equal to men. Since these observations were made, certain systems—where there was a close relationship between men and women that had a direct influence on their behavior—were under evaluation and were deconstructed because the movement’s claim is that

38. Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody*, 4.

39. Mikki, *Hood Feminism*, 72.

40. Instances when a woman had to become self-sufficient and independent from a man. Another example: feminism “really brought to the fore some of the patterns of behavior that were considered to be, ‘normal.’ Now people are asking if this is really normal? Part of that, I think, was influenced by *Leave It to Beaver* world of the 1950s, which itself was a reaction to World War II, where you had all the men going off to fight the wars, and the women were almost encouraged to work in the factories and in the offices to make up the workforce that men had kind of abandoned. And then in reaction to that, everybody wanted to go back to so-called normalcy that was really exaggerated” (Interviewee 3).

“by nature, a social system that prioritizes one gender above all others is unequal.”⁴¹

Consequently, a desire to reconstruct a different system emerged.

A Construct

Scholars of postmodernism started “producing reams of radically skeptical theory, in which existing knowledge and ways of obtaining knowledge... were indiscriminately criticized and dismantled.... The ideas that we can come to know objective reality and that what we call ‘truth’... were placed on the chopping block.”⁴² “The philosophy of postmodernism still shapes Feminism today. It asks that people question their beliefs and thoroughly examine social norms and constructs.”⁴³

Although deconstructionism has extremely negative ramifications,⁴⁴ there are some positives⁴⁵ that come from it, such as revealing the abuse and mistreatment of women. There are those deconstructing certain aspects of modernity who would not consider themselves bad, evil, or ignorant. Admittedly, some even call themselves rebels,⁴⁶ but it is because they disagree with

41. Denton, *Feminism and Gender Equality*, 80.

42. Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 45.

43. Denton, *Feminism and Gender Equality*, 43.

44. Questioning some truths to the point of abandoning it is certainly bad (e.g., sexual attraction, identity, etc).

45. “By far, one of the most widespread positive interventions of the contemporary feminist movement remains the effort to create and sustain greater cultural awareness of domestic violence as well as the changes that must happen in our thinking and action if we are to see its end. Nowadays, the problem of domestic violence is talked about in so many circles, from mass media to grade schools, that it is often forgotten that the contemporary feminist movement was the force that dramatically uncovered and exposed ongoing reality of domestic violence” (Hooks, 61).

46. “I’m really grateful for Feminism. Thanks to Feminism, I found my voice and my purpose: campaigning, fighting, and standing up for the rights of all women. Feminism also gave me the permission to reject

the current patterns of living. So, they are searching for change, but they are not rebels in the sense that they are intentionally seeking to “render absurd our ways of understanding, approaching, and living in the world and in societies”⁴⁷ as if they were intrinsically evil. More accurately, they would think the exact opposite—as a protagonist whose mission [it is] to make some core tenets of postmodernism applicable and to *reconstruct* a better world.”⁴⁸ After evaluating and deconstructing Western modernity and its standards for women, these are the major concepts many feminists found that made up the standards: patriarchy, sexism, misogyny, sex and gender, and identity.

“Western culture is a patriarchy. Feminists argue that the Western patriarchy gives men... a disproportionate amount of power over women... In order to maintain this kind of culture, cisgender women... must have their power taken away by limiting their rights... and their opportunities.”⁴⁹ Feminism views it as a sexist system and that it has been an unquestioned practice because this is the way it has always been done. “If we do something over and over again, it becomes normal. If we see the same thing over and over again, it becomes normal.... If we keep seeing only men as heads of corporations, it starts to seem ‘natural’ that only men should be heads of corporations.”⁵⁰

the notions of being a ‘good’ girl. I like being a rebel girl. I hope this anthology help spark your own rebellion” (Eric-Udorie, xxvii).

47. Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 45.

48. Pluckrose and Lindsay, *Cynical Theories*, 46.

49. Denton, *Feminism and Gender Equality*, 6.

50. Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists*, 13.

By this path of reasoning, they come to the conclusion that “gender is a social construct,⁵¹ It isn't part of objective reality and doesn't exist outside of human society... humans assign meaning to how a person looks and acts... At the center of the gender equality issue are the constructs of sex and gender and what they mean.”⁵² Many feminists would say that the relationship between men and women, in a very significant way, is a human construct. Although this attempts to fix a problem, this thought excludes a being outside of humanity who establishes a standard. Many, and in some cases, all aspects of the relationship between men and women have the potential to change. “Because humans created the patriarchy and gender roles, feminists believe humans can also change them or get rid of them entirely.”⁵³ Because of these radically skeptical foundations, Feminism has the potential to lead Christians to question God’s Word. God teaches through his Word that he is loving, but Feminism claims that the teachings in the Bible are patriarchal and sexist. So, one must be wrong. In many cases, people come to the wrong conclusion, and they either abandon God altogether or redefine who he is and what he has to say.

Religion

One system that feminists evaluated was religion. Feminism “launched a critique of patriarchal religion... exposing the way... [it] was the ideological foundation of all forms of

51. “Meaning that it exists ‘as a result of human interaction. It exists because humans agree that it exists. Humans made it up” (Denton, 11).

52. Denton, *Feminism and Gender Equality*, 11.

53. Denton, *Feminism and Gender Equality*, 89.

group oppression, sexism, racism, etc., and that such thinking formed the basis of Judeo-Christian belief systems.”⁵⁴ These religions teach “strict gender expectations,”⁵⁵ which some claim, “harm people as they grow up and find that certain parts of themselves don't fit the stereotype.”⁵⁶ They claim that gender expectations are harmful because “stereotypes limit a person’s opportunities and can affect their ability to exercise their rights.”⁵⁷ The biblical notion that there are distinct callings for men and women could (and does) lead feminists to conclude that the Bible limits women’s opportunities. Suppose those roles are not radically the same in an egalitarian sense. In that case, it follows (according to this logic) that there is no longer access to equal opportunities and that, therefore, men and women are not equal in value. If there is no access to equal opportunities, then there cannot be equality.

Moreover, religion is an essential system of Feminism because:

Society continues to be primarily a ‘Christian’ culture, masses of people continue to believe that god has ordained that women be subordinate to men in the domestic household. Even though masses of women have entered the workforce, even though many families are headed by women who are the sole breadwinners,⁵⁸ the vision of domestic life which continues to dominate the nation’s imagination is one in which the logic of male domination is intact, whether men are present in the home or not.⁵⁹

54. Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody*, 105–106.

55. Denton, *Feminism and Gender Equality*, 17.

56. Denton, *Feminism and Gender Equality*, 18.

57. Denton, *Feminism and Gender Equality*, 19.

58. It seems that Hooks is implying that Christians view women in the workforce, households headed by women, being the primary source of income as inherently male roles. It is true that, at one time, they were considered male responsibilities. However, depending on what she means by “households headed by women,” we could agree that none of these are inherently male responsibilities (which is good; otherwise, many seminarians would be in trouble). Regarding households headed by women, perhaps the view some have of Christian households is that the man is making the decisions independent from the needs and wants of everyone else in the household as if it were some sort of dictatorship role. If that is the case, those who hold that view certainly misunderstand God’s expectations for men.

59. Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody*, 2.

Hooks reasons that the lack or absence of a person's ability restricts them to subordination. The one who has less to offer is the one who submits, making them less valuable. So, she argues that since masses of women have proven what they are worth by what they can do, they should not submit to the man. This quote represents the misunderstanding among many even Christians. The advent of strengths finders and aptitude tests has brought people the discovery of many abilities and gifts. Of course, people are excited to use these gifts, and many associate the ability to do something with permission⁶⁰ to do it. To a certain extent, if a person can do something, they should be allowed to do it,⁶¹ which opens up endless wonderful opportunities for them. So, when some people hear God's guidance for men and women, they view them as restrictions on their opportunities.⁶² Although God's direction for men and women is not limited to marriage and worship, these are the most explicit instances. God does not guide men to serve as head in every instance, nor does he guide women to submit in every instance. Indeed, there are cases when a Christian woman will still glorify God if she finds herself in a position over a man. As long as this reasoning is applied within an appropriate setting, it does not have to contradict Scripture. It is only a problem when people use this mentality to do whatever they want, consequently asserting themselves above God. Concerning spiritual matters, consider the

60. "Some would say the only thing that determines roles and positions in the world should be gifts. 'If someone has the gifts to be a pastor, clearly God's already spoken,' they will maintain. And so, a woman should be a pastor because she has the gifts for it. 'See, the Spirit gave me the gifts. I should use them.' However, missing that God may give direction for how gifts are to be used. Gifts don't trump biblical truth; gifts are expressions of whom God has made us" (Interviewee 5).

61. Depending on the situation, this thinking has some truth. However, it can easily be taken to an absurd extreme. Most people would disagree that because they can murder or do drugs, then they should be allowed to murder and do drugs.

62. "I'm never all that comfortable when I hear parents say, or people say to young people, you can be anything you want to be. Well, probably not. First of all, God gives unique gifts to everyone. The key is to be what God designed you to be.... I am loved and redeemed and forgiven, Holy Child of God; that's who I am. Well, what I do is not my identity; it's how I live it out" (Interviewee 5).

implications of a close relationship between ability and permission—namely, the former influencing the latter. If the ability to do something is the power of the individual, then it must be the individual who has the power to permit it and ultimately push God out of the way. Since many feminists see Christianity as a patriarchal system, the fact that they consider Western society as primarily Christian is particularly troublesome for them. “Males... Are required to dominate women, to exploit and oppress [them], using violence if they must to keep patriarchy intact.”⁶³ For many, Christianity is easily seen as a violent system,⁶⁴ which makes it easy for many to dismiss God’s Word.

One of the interviewees shared her thoughts on the roles of men and women, this is what she had to say:

We don’t know why God chose to organize things the way he did, but he did. However, we know that he created the roles of head and helper in order... before sin came into the world. So, as much as I don’t always like my role as helper and as much as my sinful nature tends to push back against this, I know that my role is something that’s created in perfection and is intended to bring good.... But I don’t think that restricts my opportunities as a female. I think that if I look at it in the way God intended it to be looked at, it helps preserve order. It lets me serve in ways that are appropriate.⁶⁵

Some feminists view Christianity as an attempt to preserve patriarchy. “Although many feminist goals would help men as well as women, cis men often find as if they will lose something if they are no longer in power. Because of this, some men organize against women—and feminists in particular—to try and prevent them from ‘taking away’ what they think society owes them.”⁶⁶ If one takes this line of thinking and applies it to Christianity, then the conclusion would be similar

63. Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody*, ix.

64. Although this is not true, it would be foolish to think that there have not been Christians who used what the Bible says about men and women to satisfy sinful desires.

65. Interviewee 1.

66. Denton, *Feminism and Gender Equality*, 58.

to this: Christianity's opposition against Feminism is based upon who holds the power. Christianity's opposition is motivated by the need for Christian men to get back what they are entitled to. Certainly, thoughts like these are not farfetched because of how some could view what the Bible says about men and women, which reduces biblical principles to a profane battle of the sexes.

However, do the thoughts of this quote accurately describe Christianity? Is it true that the contention between Feminism and Christianity revolves around a power struggle? Christians do not understand it that way; instead, the contention is against the opposition to God's Word and all of the wonderful blessings that flow from it. However, those who apply Denton's thoughts to Christianity recognize that there is much power in the position God has called men to serve. It is also good to note that this calling has a lot of responsibilities and expectations; there is a standard for men to serve in this role. It is not a position for a man to do whatever he wants; rather, it is a position given to men to serve God in a way God guides. So, anyone holding this power is responsible for fulfilling his duty as God intended. Furthermore, this kind of thinking does not recognize the great deal of power God has given to women in her calling.

Too often, we've spoken of the women's role as submitting. That takes one element of her calling and raises it as if it's everything. Is she not to use her gifts and her wisdom? Should she not seek to influence her husband? Or maybe he's making a poor decision? Or an unspiritual decision for the family or in the church? Shouldn't she use her wisdom and God-given insight from Scripture to influence him? Of course, she should; that's a good helper. It's not merely submitting—submitting is one element. Just like for the man, pointing direction is not his whole calling. It's mostly laying down his life for her or his children or for the congregation he leads. We tend to paint little pieces and call it the whole thing.⁶⁷

Secondly, when Hooks mentions society owing men, presumably, it is respect that society provides men so that they can stay in power, implying a relationship between the two. In

67. Interviewee 5.

many cases in the secular world, the two have a direct relationship. Typically, when someone receives more respect, then they hold more power. When someone holds more power, they receive more respect. Although the relationship between Christian men and women looks similar, it is significantly different.

When observing the dynamic of power and respect, it is important to consider which comes first—which is causal. Does one hold power because of the respect they receive, or does one receive respect because of the power they hold? Since the role of the head was created by God, and as an extension of God’s authority, the role is inherently powerful. The power within headship is independent of the thoughts and opinions of those who submit to it. Although the relationship between respect and power is not direct—in that the more respect one receives the more power they hold—something can certainly be said about a direct relationship. God does direct women to respect their husbands regardless of his use in his role. However, practically speaking, when a man uses the power given to him in a more God-pleasing way, the more respect he will receive from his wife. Inversely, the more he uses the power in a dominating and oppressive way, the more he will be feared and hated.

Considering both instances, the reason for submitting is different, which can be very confusing. Submission can happen when someone is afraid, but it also naturally happens when someone trusts and respects another. The attitudes and actions of both the man and the woman will very easily reveal what kind of submission is happening. However, from an outsider’s perspective—someone who perhaps has only known submission through force—it is easy to look at the submission of a Christian wife to her husband and think that it is the same thing.

“Men and women are different. We have different hormones and different sexual organs, and different biological abilities – women can have babies, men cannot. Men have more

testosterone and are, in general, physically stronger than women.”⁶⁸ Difference can be seen as good, especially when only one sex can do something the other cannot *because* of the difference—like bearing children. However, in many cases, difference can be considered bad when both sexes have the same ability. “In the recent US elections, we kept hearing of the Lilly Ledbetter law, and if we go beyond that nicely alliterative name, it was really about this: in the US, a man and a woman are doing the same job, with the same qualifications, and the man is paid more because he is a man.”⁶⁹ In this case, although the men and women are the same in every respect besides gender, there is a monetary value given to the man *because* he is a man. So, there are times when a difference means a difference in value. Looking at this instance, one would have to agree that this is unjust. Adichie’s point is that in instances when men and women have the same abilities, they should have the same opportunities to use those abilities.

There are many times when Adichie’s argument is reasonable. However, consider how dangerous this thinking can be when applied to Scripture. There are instances when a woman has equal capacity to lead in the headship role. However, although a man and a woman could have the same abilities, or if even the woman has better gifts for the headship role, God says that this role is for the man. The one serves as head *because* he is a man—i.e., the role of headship is inherently male. However, this does not mean that the difference between men and women means difference in value, for God has declared them equal in status (Gal 3:26-29, 4:4,5). Men and women are different, and God wants them to serve each other and him in different ways. It is also important to note that the difference in calling does not mean that one calling carries more

68. Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists*, 16.

69. Adichie, *We Should All Be Feminists*, 17.

value than the other (Gen 2:18, Eph 5:22–33).⁷⁰ In fact, a large part of the value is *because* of the difference. Furthermore, this certainly does not mean that “the gifted woman should cease to use her gifts to influence outcomes. Nor does it mean that men, in order to carry out their role, cannot seek the advice of gifted women.”⁷¹

“In perfection, when God created man and woman, he gave them different roles. He gave man the role of headship and he gave woman the role of suitable helper because it was not good for man to be alone. Then, he tells them both to rule over the world as partners.”⁷² God saw it fit that there needed to be a partnership while ruling over the earth. Adam was not to do it on his own. So, the help that Eve provided is to be understood as absolutely necessary and needed help. Often the misunderstanding is like a dad asking his grade school son if he’d like to assist in fixing the car, where the dad does all the work, and the toddler is simply handing him tools—an insignificant role. However, this could not be further from how Scripture describes the relationship between man and woman. Adam needed the help of Eve—help that is suitable for a partnership for ruling over God’s creation. A more accurate way to understand the difference between men and women and the callings they serve in is to compare it to the functions of the brain and the heart. The brain and the heart are completely different organs with distinctly different functions. However, does this mean that because the two are different, there must be a different amount of value and importance given to the two? Certainly not. If the brain dies, then the body dies. If the heart dies, then the body dies. Both have an equally important role in

70. “Both men and women serve in godly callings when they honor their callings as selfless leading and selfless yielding. We’re supporting both our pictures of God at work, whether it is leadership work or supportive work. I think when we hold that up high, neither women nor men either end up feeling superior or inferior. They just have unique callings” (Interviewee 5).

71. Interviewee 3.

72. Interviewee 5.

keeping the body alive—they are equally valuable—but it is precisely the difference between the two that makes the relationship work so well. One of these organs is naturally positioned to “lead”—the brain sends a signal to the heart to pump. Naturally, the other organ is positioned to “help”—the heart supports the brain with nutrient-dense oxygenated blood necessary to survive.⁷³ The two roles are very different. However, the two roles are equally powerful, important, and valuable. This is similar to the relationship between men and women.⁷⁴ It is precisely their differences that make the relationship so wonderful. This concept taught in Scripture is also known as a form of complementarianism—the differences between the two complement each other because both sides provide something that the other side needs.

It is also valuable when one carefully examines the metaphors for principles of the roles of men and women.

The Bible never uses head and helper together. Head and helper is a mixed metaphor. The Bible gives two different metaphors for the interaction between men and women. Head comes from one, and helper comes from another. There can sometimes be difficulties when you mix them together. . . . If you use the way the Bible presents these metaphors, it is way more empowering.⁷⁵

In Genesis 2, Adam is the one who names, while Eve is the suitable helper. “In the whole creation account, God is the one who gives the names for everything leading up to the creation of Adam. We know that whenever God calls or names something, that is significantly important in the Bible (e.g., God changing Jacob’s name to Israel). It demonstrates God’s authority.”⁷⁶ Then God gives this responsibility to Adam while naming all the animals. Whatever Adam named it,

73. This is a good way to view the help that women provide—necessary and needed.

74. By no means is this a comment about intellect. *The Point* is simply that the roles of both man and woman are absolutely necessary like a brain and heart are necessary for the body to function.

75. Interviewee 6.

76. Interviewee 6.

that was its name. However, at the same time, God was showing that it was not good for Adam to be alone, in this sense, he was incomplete. So, God makes Eve as a suitable helper. Eve and what she was to provide was so significant that it changed Adam's situation from not good to good. "You will find throughout the Old Testament that God is often referred to as helper, and the help that God provides is *essential* and absolutely needed support without which we would be lost."⁷⁷ Similarly, this is the role God gave Eve to provide the help that is essential and needed. Although God called Adam and Eve to serve differently, their callings reflect different divine activities from God. Certainly, one is not more important or valuable than the other.

Christians find value in a complementarian relationship. In contrast, Feminism's promotion of gender equality seeks to find value in an egalitarian⁷⁸ approach. Its opponents say, "American conservatives are frightened by this egalitarianism, or maybe just appalled by it. It's not traditional."⁷⁹ Certainly, fear could be a way to interpret Christians' opposition to an egalitarian style relationship. However, it would be more accurate to say that the real issue is grounded in the fact that the teaching is contrary to God's will and, therefore, not appealing.

An egalitarian system teaches that men and women are equally valuable when women have the same access to do/be all of the same exact things as men, which can make sense in some instances. If two are viewed as equals and have equal capability, then they should be allowed to do the same exact thing.⁸⁰ So, when an egalitarian hears Scriptural teachings on the matter, the assumption is that Christians do not view the two sexes as equals. However, equal opportunity

77. Interviewee 6.

78. The viewpoint that "there are no gender distinctions... women and men are interchangeable when it comes to functional roles" (Complementarianism vs. Egalitarianism—Which View Is Biblically Correct?).

79. Eric-Udorie, *Can We All Be Feminists*, 58.

80. Like in a workplace.

does not necessarily offer equal value. More accurately, it offers the potential to be equally valuable based upon ability. Some conclude that when two people are equally valuable, they can do the same thing. However, if there is a case when a woman does not have the same capacity—or is given the same opportunity—to do the same thing as a man, then some may conclude that she must not be equally valuable. Ultimately, the problem with this kind of thinking is that the value of a person is based on that person’s ability to perform. So, as long as the person demonstrates their ability, then they will remain valuable.

It is also good to consider what is at stake for feminists if egalitarianism is threatened or taken away. If it is threatened or if it is taken away, then everything that the movement is seeking is in jeopardy. Inevitably, many powerful emotions will be tied to this because, for many of them, this is how they protect their identity. In many respects, egalitarianism is *the* methodology used to obtain what the movement is seeks—equality and its value.

Although Feminism does criticize religion, it is not anti-religious. “Feminism has been and continues to be a resistance movement which valorizes spiritual practice.”

With keen spiritual insight and divine clarity, the mystic Julian of Norwich would write long before the advent of contemporary feminism: ‘Our savior is our true mother and whom they are endlessly born and out of whom we shall never come.’ Daring to counter the notion of our savior as always and only male, Julian of Norwich was charting the journey back to sacred feminine, helping to free women from the bondage of patriarchal religion.⁸¹

In a more extreme form, Feminism offers another religion, while using the language of Christianity, and in a program that appears to offer freedom from patriarchal bondage.

Alternatively, some feminists look to eastern religious traditions for answers, where “Creation spirituality replaced a patriarchal spirituality rooted in notions of fall and redemption. In

81. Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody*, 105.

Hinduism, Buddhism, and Voudoun spiritual traditions, women have found images of female deities that allowed for a return to a vision of a goddess-centered spirituality.”⁸²

Feminism seeks freedom from patriarchal religions such as Christianity, claiming that being free from Christianity is desirable and even good. “Fundamentalist patriarchal religion has been and remains a barrier preventing the spread of feminist thoughts and practice. Indeed, no group has demonized feminists more than right-wing religious fundamentalists.”⁸³ Interviewees were asked to react to this quote. Interviewee one had this to say:

Christianity does have the potential of giving the impression of subjugating women. I’m not saying we do that, but I think that there is the possibility that we give off that impression. Part of the reason I think that is because so often we talk about what women *can’t* do. That is a necessary conversation that needs to happen, but that isn’t the main focus, nor should it be the main focus. The main focus should be on equality in Christ. These roles were set up for our good they are simply for good order in the church. It’s not to intentionally put me down.... however, the way that we talk about things and the impressions that we give off does not help.⁸⁴

She goes on to say that a more helpful practice would be to start in Galatians 3 with a Christian’s identity in Christ, then move on to the roles of men and women. Another Interviewee had concerns about the way certain truths are communicated. “Many men operate on denotation. They use words the way the dictionary defines them, whereas many women operate primarily on connotation. We understand words the way our culture has been using them.”⁸⁵ Many Christian women have no problem with the content taught. They know what God has to say and how he guides them. The new redeemed child of God within the Christian always rejoices in what God

82. Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody*, 106.

83. Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody*, 107.

84. Interviewee 1.

85. Interviewee 4.

has to say. However, it can be demoralizing when one is not sensitive to the differences between what is intended to be said and what will be heard.

Marriage

The church is not the only arena in which feminists desire to free women from patriarchy. As one author puts it: “The entrance of many heterosexual women into the movement had been sparked by male domination in intimate relationships... where gender inequality was the norm”... the double standard in relationships... condemned females... while allowing men the space to do whatever they desired.”⁸⁶ From this it is clear that women seek freedom by redefining traditional notions of marriage and monogamy. “Romantic love, as most people understand it in patriarchal culture, makes one unaware, renders one powerless and out of control. Feminist thinkers called attention to the way this notion of love served the interests of patriarchal men and women. It supported the notion that one could do anything in the name of love.”⁸⁷

Some feminists even portrayed marriage as sexual slavery:

They highlighted the way traditionally sexist bonds lead to marriage and is where elements of intimacy, care, and respect were sacrificed so that men could be on top... patriarchs ruling the roost... [some] say sexual monogamy with men is reinforcing the idea that the female body was property belonging to the individual male she was bonded with.⁸⁸

86. Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody*, 78.

87. Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody*, 101.

88. Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody*, 78–79.

So, “women having the freedom to be non-monogamous... continues to disrupt and challenge the notion that the female body belongs to men. Like all the positive changes produced by feminist critique... it has helped create a world where women and men can have more satisfying sexual relationships.”⁸⁹ Feminist reaction to patriarchy has led to some questioning and even deconstructing concepts that were once considered universal truths and even good practices. Some claim that to be aware and have power, and control, one must abandon romantic love defined in patriarchal culture.⁹⁰

Moreover, some feminists claim that marriage within a patriarchal culture promotes inequality. Many think “that marriage is between equals. That's not what traditional marriage was. Throughout much of history in the West, the laws defining marriage made the husband essentially an owner and the wife a possession. Or the man a boss and the woman a servant or slave.”⁹¹

“If women and men want to know love, we have to yearn for feminism. For without feminist thinking and practice, we lack the foundation to create loving bonds.”⁹² As a reaction to

89. Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody*, 80–81. Some claim, “Compulsory heterosexuality is oppressive, and women should be encouraged to choose lesbianism.” However, “many individual feminist women found that non-monogamous relationships often simply gave men more power while undermining women” (80). Moreover, notice that the solution to the problem is not to work on the relationship; rather, it is to complicate it even further by including more sexual partners. Feministic thinking promises “satisfying sexual relationships” at the cost of giving up the only thing that provides sexual satisfaction.

90. Although biblical marriage is based on mutual and unconditional love and not romance, many can and do place Christian love under this generic category of “patriarchal love.” So, it is possible to use this argument to abandon what God has to say about love, which is problematic because they would be abandoning the only thing that can make one aware and powerful. The Bible teaches an individual the ability to discern what is good and bad. It puts them in a position to teach and correct, especially within relationships. A person can run away and abandon the problem, but that will inevitably lead to confronting the same problems in different places.

91. Solnit, *Men Explain*, 56. This is most likely what many think of when they hear that women are to submit.

92. Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody*, 100.

sexism, Feminism deconstructed the wonderful relationship between husband and wife within marriage; reconstructed what it means to have a committed, loving relationship with another, and has attached promises of happiness, liberation, and satisfaction, to this new social system. Their approach to marriage is clear: “To choose feminist politics, then, is a choice to love.”⁹³ “It is time to slam the door shut on that era. And to open another door through which we can welcome equality: between genders, among marital partners, for everyone in every circumstance. Marriage equality is a threat to inequality. It's a boon to everyone who values and benefits from equality. It's for all of us.”⁹⁴ “Often when people proclaim that [marriage] is making a comeback, what they really mean is that more sexist-defined notions of marriage are ‘in’ again. This fact is troubling feminist movement because it is just as clear today as it was yesterday that marriage is built on a sexist foundation are likely to be deeply troubled and rarely last.”⁹⁵ So, “Women who wanted to be with men faced the challenge of converting men to feminist thinking. If [men] were not feminist, [women] knew there would be no lasting happiness.”⁹⁶ In other words, if one wants a happy relationship, then it must be based upon feminist thinking, and Scriptural teaching must be left behind.

93. Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody*, 104.

94. Solnit, *Men Explain*, 60.

95. Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody*, 83. Certainly, there is no happiness found in a sexist relationship. If a man or a woman does not view the other the way God does, then that relationship could be headed toward pain and destruction. A marriage built upon a sexist foundation is deeply troubled and probably will not last. “Sexist foundation” cannot be equated to Scriptural foundation. It is not the application of Scriptural principles that doom a marriage, since appropriate application of God’s principles are for the good of the marriage. Rather, it is inappropriate applications of the principles that make a marriage “deeply troubled.” In these cases, the deep trouble is within the individual misapplying God’s teaching. So, to say, “Traditionally sexist marriages.... tend to breed the seeds of misery and dissatisfaction that served as a catalyst for feminist rebellion and domestic relationships” (Hooks, 83) would be inaccurate. For the sake of clarity, it is not God’s teachings that are sexist, rather, it is the individual misusing God’s Word for sin who is sexist. Ultimately, the problem is abuse—of a partner and of God’s Word.

96. Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody*, 101.

VALUE

Hooks is one of the many who have experienced and witnessed abuse and mistreatment in some form or another. In many ways, she represents so many other women whom men have hurt. Many women have been left in a place where they feel that their value was stolen from them through inappropriate, hateful, and even violent words and actions. Hooks' thoughts and beliefs reflect so many others who have been affected by the feminist movement:

When I began to resist male domination, to rebel against patriarchal thinking (and to oppose the strongest patriarchal voice in my life—my mother's voice), I was still a teenager, suicidal, depressed, uncertain about how I would find meaning in my life and a place for myself. I needed Feminism to give me a foundation of equality and justice to stand on. Mama has come around to feminist thinking. She sees me and all her daughters (we are six) living better lives because of feminist politics. She sees the promise and hope in the feminist movement. It is the promise and hope that I want to share with... everybody.⁹⁷

The promises and claims of Feminism appeal to many people who have been hurt, but the movement cannot give what it offers for it only comes from one place—identity in Jesus Christ. Although the movement has brought to light many important issues, it leads so many away from the only thing that can give them the value they so desperately seek.

The women interviewed for this paper had an opportunity to share their thoughts about their own value. Each interview was prefaced with a brief comment on the great impact Feminism has had on culture. Some of that influence has undoubtedly been good. Some of it—especially theoretical Feminism—has been not so good. Feminists have served our culture in

97. Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody*, x.

creating a greater awareness of powerful issues that arise when considering the relationship between men and women. One example of this is the problem of abuse (verbal and physical) has greatly harmed many women's sense of self-worth. It was then followed up with this question:

“What makes you feel valued and fulfilled?” One of the interviewee's had this to say:

I grew up with a wonderful Christian father. The way he and my mother raised us had to do with being loved and valued for who we are. They always gave us a sense of purpose. We learned from my parents that our sense of purpose had to do with getting the message of Jesus to other people and living a life that reflects what God says, and that has carried me throughout my adult years. It was because of the father I had. It is easy to relate to God as a loving father and live my life according to his will when I had a loving father in my life.⁹⁸

God's calling for men to be God-fearing fathers significantly influences their children. One who does not take this calling seriously runs the risk of negatively affecting his children, as seen in the life of people like Hooks, as we have seen. However, in this case, we can see a wonderful example of how a God-fearing father can positively impact the life of his children. It is easy to look out into the world and list how the world is negatively influencing children and wonder what is to be done. Perhaps one of the easiest places to start is by raising a family grounded in the Word of God.

Another interviewee had this to say:

My value comes from my identity as a child of God. My Savior came after me. He fought for me. He went to the cross and died for me. Everything else about my life flows out from my identity, and I would totally be lost without it.... There are so many other areas that bring me joy, where I can live and work and find fulfillment from knowing that God put me in those places to reflect his image as a woman. I find fulfillment in the fact that God has allowed me to be a wife and a helper to my husband. I find great fulfillment and joy as a parent and mother to my children.... I find great satisfaction in the work that I do, knowing that it is my opportunity to give thanks to God.... Knowing that I can honor God by serving in these places he has placed me brings me a lot of joy.⁹⁹

98. Interviewee 1.

99. Interviewee 2.

Identity in Christ is inherently valuable. She finds satisfaction and fulfillment in her sanctified living that honors God. She loves using her abilities to serve God and others. Her identity guides her abilities, which is infinitely greater than using her abilities to find her identity.

Another interviewee said: “I am very much valued and fulfilled when I’m able to help someone; fulfilling a need or to contribute meaningfully in some way. So, one of my roles at church is the communications coordinator. I very much view my job there as doing what I can to take stuff off the pastors’ plate so they can do what only they are able to do.”¹⁰⁰ This interviewee also went on to say that “it [also] is really nice when somebody shows some appreciation.”¹⁰¹ When someone appreciates¹⁰² what she does, her acts of service feel “validated as being important to someone else.”

Participants were also asked: “How does your identity in Christ offer you a sense of purpose?” One of the women interviewed had this to say: “First and foremost my identity is in Christ as a child of God. My sense of purpose is my calling—what I’ve been called to do.... How can I get involved in spreading the gospel and the work of Christ through my own work.... I try as much as I possibly can to live out that calling as a redeemed child of God.”¹⁰³ In this participant’s response, it seems that much of her purpose is found in the Great Commission in Matthew 28—the call for all Christians—and that her specific calling as a woman contributes to the greater calling for all of Christianity.

100. Interviewee 1.

101. Interviewee 1.

102. Recognizes the value provided by her; views her service as a heart providing the help the brain absolutely needs.

103. Interviewee 1.

It is important to note that these responses reveal a close relationship between value and purpose. In the life of a Christian, because her identity in Christ fills her with limitless value, she has an innate desire to glorify God with her life. One of the reasons Feminism is appealing is because it provides a long list of things a person can *do* to achieve something, which naturally gives a sense of purpose. Often, women in the church are told they cannot do something, when really, they are searching for the things they can do. “If you made a list of what women can do and what women can’t do, the prohibition side would be way longer.... But sometimes that’s necessary. We need to separate ourselves from secular culture.”¹⁰⁴ However, at the same time it is difficult to serve when one only knows what they can’t do, and there is not much direction to what they can do.

Through their responses, all the women interviewed for this paper confessed their faith in God’s adoption of them as his children (Gal 3:26; 4:4, 5; 1 John 3:1), giving them a new identity. As God’s children, nothing is dearer to them than their Father in heaven (Ps 73:25), and nothing more is needed than God’s grace (2 Cor 12:9). These women agreed that their value comes from their identity in Christ, which naturally shapes the way they view themselves, interact with others, and live out their lives.

104. Interviewee 1.

CONCLUSION

The promise of love and acceptance makes Feminism appealing. “Before I had feminist theory and practice to pull me fully into the awareness of the necessity of self-love and self-acceptance as necessary for self-actualization I walked on a spiritual path which affirmed those same messages.”¹⁰⁵ Feminism is what brought her to realize that it is necessary for her to love and accept herself¹⁰⁶ to come to realize her potential. However, consider the implicit conditional: if one wants self-actualization, then follow the ideologies of Feminism because Feminism teaches self-love and self-acceptance. Feminism is even likened to religion in that it offers a sense of identity. However, the difference is that the identity Feminism offers is one that is rooted in the potential a woman has, whereas the identity Christ gives is to be a redeemed child of God. The identity in Feminism is incomplete and dependent on the individual’s abilities, whereas the identity in Christ is a free gift solely dependent on the limitless love of God. This means that the value Feminism offers is constantly changing and is constantly needing to be affirmed by action and ability, which is in this endless pursuit to reach its fullest potential.¹⁰⁷ In contrast, identity in Christ is unchanging and unaffected because it is an objective gift, sealed with his blood.

Many feminists, hoping for a better life, started observing the systems within Western modernity. Many concluded that “they are constructed by society and assigned to us at birth.

105. Hooks, *Feminism Is for Everybody*, 105.

106. Self-love and acceptance are loaded terms. We could certainly understand this in a God-pleasing way. However, considering the context of this writing, it is probably more along the lines of “loving and accepting” even the sinful flaws. Of course, this kind of thinking is problematic because this kind of “love and acceptance” has no need for a Savior.

107. The thin veneer of value covering hopelessness.

‘Gender,’ and all that word implies today, is the net result of the decisions, debates, accidents, and battles played out amongst our 100 billion forebears... The two genders are not alike in value or status.”¹⁰⁸ So, many see the need for change. “The struggle for gender equality has only just begun. We are still very early on in the process of unpicking from our society the laws, decrease, practices, and cultures that have accumulated over millennia to enshrine women’s subordination.”¹⁰⁹ Although many of the concepts that Feminism revolves around have some good, the methodology for achieving these goals are potentially dangerous. They can lead people even further away from what they are seeking. The value Feminism offers is only given when an individual uses their abilities to prove that she has the same worth as a man. It is hopelessness wrapped in the thin veneer of value because it is shortly lived. It is a life destined for exhaustion because of the implicit expectation to maintain one’s own value. Whereas identity in Christ freely and unceasingly gives the true value that many are searching for. God’s children are not threatened by one another. Instead, they see their differences as a beautiful opportunity to serve God in a partnership.

108. Banyard, *Equality Illusion*, 3.

109. Banyard, *Equality Illusion*, 4.

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