

Why Christian Feminists have a Different Jesus

By Dr. David A. DeWitt

- *Can a church be excused for feminism because it gets people to receive Jesus and has the gospel message right?*
- *How does feminism affect other doctrines?*
- *Does Christian feminism lead to heresy?*

[From a lecture presented to Relational Concepts by Dr. Dan Wallace, Professor of New Testament at Dallas Theological Seminary.]

When our ministries try to please people, they will eventually compromise. As Paul said, *For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ* (Galatians 1:10).

There is an increasing tendency in “seeker” churches or churches with “seeker services” to be egalitarian. In other words, they see no distinction between the roles of men and women in the church. Different churches participate in this to different degrees, but it is increasingly popular to have women speaking, teaching, and leading men in public prayer, classes, and occupying the position of an elder or a pastor. Some “seeker” churches, such as the Willow Creek Church, north of Chicago, Illinois, require members to hold an egalitarian position to the extent that members be able to “joyfully sit under the teaching of women teachers at Willow Creek” and “joyfully submit to the leadership of women in various leadership positions at Willow Creek” (“The Man Behind the Megachurch,” *Christianity Today*, November 13, 2000, p. 58). This leadership of women over men is strictly forbidden in the Bible (1 Corinthians 11:2-10; 14:34-35; 1 Timothy 2:11-14; 3:1-5; and Titus 1:6). The egalitarian feminist responds to these passages by claiming they are only relevant to the ancient culture. But the Bible says it is because of (1) the angels (1 Corinthians 11:10), (2) the order of creation (1 Timothy 2:13, 1 Corinthians 11:9), and (3) that *the woman, being deceived, fell into transgression* (1 Timothy 2:14). None of the biblical reasons have anything to do with culture.

Feminism Changes the Definition of God

Egalitarian feminism creates a bigger problem which cannot be dismissed by simply saying male headship is cultural. It impacts the nature of the roles of God the Father and God the Son. 1 Corinthians 11:3 reads,

But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.

If the man is really not the head of the woman, then neither is God the Father the head of Christ. So the egalitarian feminists must change the definition of the Trinity, which is clearly taught in the Bible and which has been clearly understood by every traditional church (Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, and Protestant) for nearly 2,000 years (specifically, since the church Council of Nicaea in 325 A.D.). This is one of those basic doctrines agreed upon by all conservative Bible believing scholars. To change the Trinity is heresy. The nature of the Godhead has been understood throughout history as the Son being the same as the Father in **essence** (they are both God) yet eternally a Son in a role of submission to the Father **functionally**.

There is no perfect illustration of the Trinity, but it could be in one sense pictured as a President, a Vice President, and a Foreman in a corporation. All three are coequal in their **essence** (they are coequally human) but there is a distinct hierarchy in their roles **functionally**.

Churches Made for People Change their View of God

Gilbert Bilezikian, Professor Emeritus at Wheaton College and resident theologian at the Willow Creek Church, wrote an article (in the *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society*, 40/1, March 1997) claiming, “Prior to the incarnation there had been no need for him [Christ] to be obedient since he was equal with God. ... obedience was a new experience for him, something he had to learn.” Bilezikian claims that Jesus was only in submission to the Father for His incarnation here on earth and not eternally. Therefore, women being in submission to men is not illustrated in the Godhead (via 1 Corinthians 11:3). I’m not sure how that serves his point because the Bible only teaches the submission of women to men in this life, during their incarnation on earth, not throughout eternity.

But the issue is much deeper than feminism. Whenever the church is designed for people (seeker services being only one example), then doctrinal perversion will follow sooner or later. For example, consider what Bishop Spong (of what church was not disclosed) said to a congregation of Christ Community Church in Spring Lake, Michigan. The *Muskegon Chronicle* (November 14, 1999, p. 1-2A) reported, “Spong’s vision of a vital, healthy Christian church involves a position for women that is equal to, not subordinate to, men. It would provide a full place for gay and lesbian and transgendered people, openly and without judgment.”

When dealing with the biblical view of God, Spong said, “That view of God is dead.” The *Chronicle* reports Spong proposes a different view of God. He calls God “the source of all life, the source of all love, and the ground of all being.” So Bishop Spong found it necessary to change the view of God to maintain his view of feminism and homosexuality.

Today, evangelical churches even define Jesus as a buddy and One who serves us.

The Bible Teaches an Eternal Submission of the Son to the Father

Daniel 7:13-14

I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations, and {men of every} language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

John 5:19-23

...the Son can do nothing of Himself. Also, since the Father gave the task of judgment to the Son, the Father must have a superior role.

John 14:28

... the Father is greater than I, not in essence as the cults claim but in His role as Father.

Mark 14:62

Christ will be *sitting at the right hand of power.* This seems to imply an eternal subordination to the power He is on the right hand of.

1 Corinthians 11:3, Ephesians 5:22-25

In both the words and the context, and in all Greek literature, “head” means authority, and “submission” is never mutual.

1 Corinthians 15:20-28

God the Father is the only exception to all that will be put in subjection under Christ so that *God may be all in all.*

Philippians 2:6-11

God the Father exalted Christ. The exalter is clearly greater than the one being exalted.

John 17:5

The one doing the glorifying (God the Father) is greater than the one receiving the glory (God the Son).

Revelation 5:1-10

Christ is the lamb who is worthy, but He is not the one on the throne. Rather, He is said to be the one *who purchased for God with your blood men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation.*

Questions and Answers

Q: *Can a feminist church be excused because it gets people to receive Jesus and has the gospel message right?*

A: Jesus who? How can we say they have the gospel message right when the Jesus they proclaim is not in submission to the Father and the God they proclaim is not the authority over all?

Q: *How does feminism affect other doctrines?*

A: Paul said, *The word of the cross is to those who are perishing foolishness* (1 Corinthians 1:18) and a *stench from death to death* to unbelievers (2 Corinthians 2:16). But when you appeal to those people to come to your “seeker services” regularly, you will ultimately change the Word of God so that it appeals to those people.

Q: *Does Christian feminism lead to heresy?*

A: It has already led to heresy in some churches. If you see the church as something we build instead of what Christ is building (Matthew 16:18, Acts 2:39), then heresy is right around the corner.