

What About ... Patriarchy?

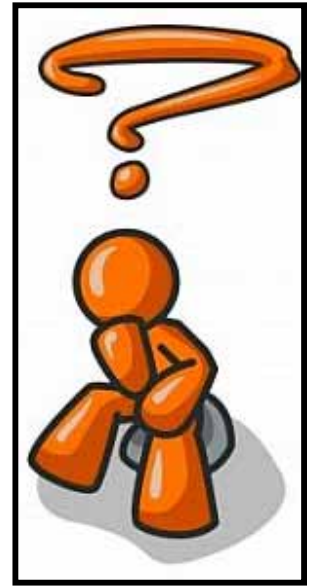
BY REBECCA S. MAY

Christian author and blogger, Rachel Evans, wrote, "...patriarchy is a result of sin. I believe that followers of Jesus are to be champions of equality—the teaching and example of Jesus point to a new way of healing, equality, and mutual submission within male and female relationships—and that it is our calling, as imitators of Christ, to reflect God's new vision for the world, initiated through Jesus Christ, in which there is no hierarchy or power struggle between slave and free, Jew and Greek, male and female, for all are one in the family of God." After having suggested that rape is the result of patriarchy, Evans said, "It's not about sex. It's not about church leadership. It's not about roles. It's not about the Bible. It's about power. It's about whether or not patriarchy—man's rule over woman—really represents God's ideal for the world"(rachelheldevans.com).

If patriarchy is a result of sin, it surprises me that Luke would consider David, the man after God's own heart, who does all of God's will, as being a patriarch (Acts 2:29, 13:22). And why did the author of Hebrews call Abraham, *the patriarch* (Hebrews 7:4)? Obviously, Abraham endorsed, not just the position, but the practice of patriarchy, having affirmed his wife who called him lord – something the Apostle Peter encourages other wives to do—if *you do what is right* (1 Peter 3:6).

This resistance to submission has long existed in the church. But, even in the midst of objecting to submission, many believers continued to support leadership roles for men. Evans, however, is going beyond the rejection of a woman's responsibility—freeing women from the biblical command to obey their husbands has already been successfully accomplished by the church. She is even going beyond the rejection of a man's role—headship was done away with shortly after submission was erased. What Evans rejects is masculinity—a man acting like a man—and specifically, the most mature form of masculinity, patriarchy. Thankfully, Evans believes men are still valuable, especially if they join Evans in the rejection of patriarchy. Interestingly enough, Evans says, "protests from men will be more effective than protests from women."

To say that "all are one" in the family of God is true if you are speaking of salvation—whether male or female, *you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus* (Galatians 3:26). However, as it relates to how life is lived on this earth, as members of the body (Ephesians 5:30), it matters significantly whether you are male or female. All role distinctions continue in the body of Christ. Though both are equally savable, Jews have an advantage over Gentiles (Romans 1:16; 2:9-10; 3:1-2). Slaves must obey their masters (Colossians 3:22). Females are not to exercise authority over males (1 Timothy 2:12). Children must be obedient to their parents in all things (Colossians 3:20). Believers must submit to Christ (Ephesians 5:24). And wives must be subject to their husbands (Colossians 3:18). What justification is there in removing one of these hierarchies and not another? If, as followers of Jesus, we are to be "champions of equality," why not remove the rule of parents over children, or better yet, Christ over the church?



If "the teaching and example of Jesus point to a new way of healing, equality, and mutual submission within male and female relationships," it would be nice to have at least one verse to substantiate that. For example, if Jesus believed in equality, why were all the disciples male? If Jesus wanted to be an example of healing the wounds of patriarchy, then wouldn't having a female as one of the chosen twelve have sufficiently communicated that?

God said, *women will be preserved through the bearing of children* (1 Timothy 2:15). But for Evans, and the modern church, it is the man, having now been stripped of all characteristics pertaining to maleness, who has been reduced to preservation by his contribution to reproduction. But God desires more for the man, having given him the responsibility of headship as the platform to love, nourish, and cherish his wife, *just as Christ also does the church* (Ephesians 5:28-30). These characteristics are what defines patriarchy—the most mature form of male headship. But if he is to not to lead, how is he to exhibit the characteristics of leadership?

Evans is right about one thing, the question is whether or not patriarchy really represents God's ideal for the world. But she is wrong to say this is not about the Bible. If this is not about the Bible, then all emotional pleas would have equal footing. I think Evans' arguments are pathetic. I can only guess how she would respond to mine. So who is right? Without the Bible to determine the truth, we are just a couple of women propagating our own personal ideology. But if we turn to the Bible, we find out that it is about patriarchy! It is about man's headship over woman. *As the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything* (Ephesians 5:24). Apparently, it does represent God's ideal for the world.