

Brotherhood

Male and female created He them

By George Davis and Michael Clark

In Christ *all* worldly distinctions or lines of separation are removed. All boundaries of race, class and sex are eliminated. Such distinctions cannot be, for we are all one in Christ Jesus, one person, one new man. Whether Jew, Greek, slave, freeman, male or female, all that are baptized into Christ, and are *all* sons of God.

". . .you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many as were baptized into Christ, you put on Christ. There cannot be Jew nor Greek, there is no slave nor freeman, there is no male and female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus."
(Galatians 3:26-28 LITV)/span>

The word for sons in verse twenty-six above is:

5207 uiov huiois {hwee-os'} apparently a primary word;

1) a son

1a) rarely used for the young of animals

1b) generally used of the offspring of men

1c) in a restricted sense, the male offspring (one born by a father and of a mother)

1d) in a wider sense, a descendant, one of the posterity of anyone

The sons of God mentioned above are neither male nor female, since the following verse (verse 27) describes those who are sons as neither male nor female. The word should be translated siblings or children where it does not specifically apply to a particular gender. Among those who abide in faith in Christ Jesus, the ground at the foot of the cross is perfectly level. In the past we have written against the hierarchical ruling over and abuse of power in the church, but have not written on another great abuse that we believe is equally damaging to the family of God--the devaluing of the sisters in the body of Christ. The only covering spoken of in the New Testament of one man over another sibling is the husband covering the wife in the love of Christ. Everyone else is under the direct covering of Jesus Himself (see our article, "Who Is Your Covering?" on <http://www.awildernessvoice.com>). If the husband loves his wife as Christ loves the church, there is no difference found here, for His great love makes them one.

God made clear from the beginning that we are all members a family. When we get away from the model of the family, abuse and confusion come in. There is not, nor has there ever been a ruling over system among those who walk by faith. Dear siblings, forgive us men who have abused our places in His body,. often getting our authority to do so from mistranslated scriptures. God is calling us to repent from the dysfunctionality of the world model unto the functionality of His family.

W.E. Vines writes of the God's sons, huios:

The difference between believers as 'children of God' and as 'sons of God' is brought out in Rom. 8:14-21. The Spirit bears witness with their spirit that they are "children of God," and, as such, they are His heirs and joint-heirs with Christ. This stresses the fact of their spiritual birth (vv. 16, 17). On the other hand, "as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God," i.e., 'these and no other.' Their conduct gives evidence of the dignity of their relationship and their likeness to His character. ALL are Sons, All are one in Him. The word "one" denotes solidarity, a unity based upon equality. "In Christ. . .the second Adam" there has been a recovery of the equality that mankind, male and female, knew before sin entered the world.

It all began with the Divine proposal, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." After that God created man, male and female. (See Genesis 1:26-27) Here in the Genesis account, the term man (adam) is used as a synonym for both man and woman. God said, "Let us make man ...male and female created he them." The word "them" defines "man." The Genesis five account is even plainer. "Male and female he made them, naming them Man, and giving them his blessing on the day when they were made." (Genesis 5:2 BBE) So the image and likeness of God is not seen in the male alone, nor in the female alone. His image is seen in the whole man, both male and female, as they manifest their uniqueness and oneness. This helps us understand the mutuality and equality that existed between Adam and Eve in the garden. This was short lived however, for sin brought discord between man and women, a division that did not exist before that time. Before this disorder Adam and Eve lived in harmony and equality. How do we know this? Consider the following words of judgment upon Eve, spoken by God just prior to the expulsion from the garden. "I will greatly increase your sorrow and your conception; you shall bear sons in sorrow, and your desire shall be toward your husband; and he shall rule over you." (Genesis 3:16 LITV) Before this time Adam exercised dominion over the garden but he had never exercised dominion over

Eve. Now, as a consequence of sin, Eve's desires would be subject to Adam. Now he would exercise dominion over her. This condition of inequality was not God's original intention for mankind and as the product of sin, it can never be viewed as His best. Through the finished work of Christ, this breach has been reversed.

We realize that there is a balance to this, especially as it relates to marriage, where the man models the loving and sacrificial relationship of Christ to His church and the woman exemplifies the submissive and loving response of the church to Christ. In fact, we are certain that this union and all that it represents was foremost in God's mind when He said, "Let us make man (male and female) in our image, after our likeness." Even though the husband is the head of his wife, if they are in Christ, they are equals and she is first his sister and then his wife. (See 1 Corinthians 9:5) His call is not to rule her as a king rules his kingdom, but to lay down his life for her. (Ephesians 5:25) Headship is not lordship. We will address this in more detail later. For now, suffice it to say there is only one Lord.

Now let us consider this divine equality as expressed in the family of God.

The Equality of Brothers and Sisters

Now, we will solicit the help of Brian Perkins, a dear friend and brother in Christ, who recently wrote the following.

"It (adelphos) can literally be translated 'from the same womb' and was often used of twins, INCLUDING brother/sister pairs. That's why I abandoned the use of 'brothers/brethren' a few years ago and began to use 'siblings'... ADELPHOS (comes from DELPHOS: 'womb') literally means 'from womb', but is normally considered to be, 'son of the same mother'. However,

Euripides uses ADELPHOS (masculine genitive/dative dual) in Electra 420-410 BC (line 536), 'the foot of brother and sister would not be the same in size, for the male conquers.'

Here, Euripides uses a masculine plural word that has for centuries been considered to ONLY refer to males. The only significance to his using the DUAL is that it's clear he is referring to two siblings. However, the other contextual information, 'the male conquers' makes it absolutely evident that one of these siblings is female. This provides incontrovertible extra-biblical evidence that completely dispels the myth that because ADELPHOS is masculine, it can only refer to males."

So Just as the term Adam is descriptive of both man and women, the appellation brother, in its wider and generic sense, is non-gender specific as well.

For instance, in 1John 3:14 the apostle John set forth the test of life. "We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loves not his brother (adelphos) abides in death." Can we assume by this that it is acceptable to hate our sisters in Christ? They're not mentioned here, or are they? This is one of those instances where adelphos applies to both male and female siblings.

W.E. Vine mentions Matthew 23:8 as an example where the Greek word adelphos, translated brothers/brethren, applies to all believers apart from sex. "But you, do not be called 'Rabbi'; for One is your Teacher, the Christ, and you are all brethren."

The New Living Translation reads, "Don't ever let anyone call you 'Rabbi,' for you have only one teacher, and all of you are on the same level as brothers and sisters." This is why posturing through use of honorific titles is to live a lie, because we are all brothers and sisters on the same level.

In most households, it does not bode well when one of the children, male or female, tries to lord it over the others. They are from the same womb. They are equals in every sense of the word. The same is true of our Father's household. Adelphos was a favorite oriental metaphor used to express likeness, similarity and equality. It denotes relatedness through blood; kin, those who have the same parents. The Hebrew equivalent, ach, was used, to address one another by those who were equal in rank (1Kings 9:13). It would have been considered insubordination to refer to a superior as brother. So when Christ used the term brothers to define His relationship to His disciples, it would have been ambiguous and mysterious in that culture. How can the Lord of glory also be our brother? How could the King of kings be a servant to all?

Jesus restored equality and brotherhood to the earth by his death on Calvary. After his resurrection He first appeared to Mary Magdalene and sent her to the rest of his disciples with a message. This was his first message to them since His suffering. For this reason, His words should be considered as extremely important." . . .go to my brothers (adelphos) and tell them, 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God '" (John.20:17). These words reveal the depth of the work Christ accomplished on the cross. A family was born that day. Christ is the firstborn from the dead (Colossians 1:18). He is the firstborn among many brethren-- (adelphos) (Romans

8:29). He is the elder brother and the Servant of all. The author of Hebrews called this new family "the ekklesia of the firstborn." (Hebrews 12:23- CLNT). He also wrote, "For it became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many children (5207 huioi - sons) to glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one, for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, 'I will declare your name to my brothers. In the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.' Again, 'I will put my trust in him.' Again, 'Behold, here am I and the children whom God has given me '" (Hebrews 2:10-13-WEB).

When the Author of Life was raised by the power of God and came forth from the tomb on that great resurrection morning, the firstborn of many brethren was delivered from the womb through travail and suffering. The firstborn from the dead had emerged victorious over death and the grave. The Author of Life has gone on before us, preparing the way, and is therefore called the firstborn, implying that many are to follow. Through Him many sons will be brought to glory, so that "both he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one." One what? One womb! ALL true believers have the same Father. For this reason Christ is not ashamed to call us brethren!

This understanding was foundational to the first century believers. It is not surprising that the term brother/brethren (adelphos) became the most endearing term among the children of God. It served as a constant reminder that they were all from ONE. This was foundational to their unity. However, before long an old strife began to resurface and it became so entrenched that it continues until this day.

The Chief Cause of Strife

And there was also a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest. (Luke 22:24)

The disciples thought that Christ's kingdom would be like the other kingdoms around about them, but Jesus revealed God's Kingdom in a different context. This context was family, where the old serve the young, and those thought to be foremost humble themselves as household servants. The question of who would be the greatest was the primary cause of bickering among the disciples. When believers forget that they are siblings, on the same level, strife occurs.

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John wrote,

"I wrote something to the assembly; but Diotrephes, who loves to have the first place among them, receives us not. For this reason, if I come, I will bring to remembrance his works which he does, babbling against us with wicked words; and not content with these, neither does he himself receive the brethren; and those who would he prevents, and casts them out of the assembly. Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, (Lit. the evil) but what is good. He that does good is of God. He that does evil has not seen God." (3 John 1:9-11-DRB)

Here we see the cycle of division that is responsible for most of the denominations of our day. It begins when someone seeks the highest seat, desiring to be foremost. Next comes self-promotion carried out like Absalom-He electioneered, postured and paraded about with kisses designed to steal the hearts, while he secretly discredited anyone he perceived to be a threat to his ambition. Once someone gains control, a forced division follows, designed to maintain that control. Everyone must swear a special allegiance to the leader. Anyone who does not is considered disloyal, viewed with suspicion, and ultimately asked to leave the assembly. Anyone who does not go willingly is cast out. This is what John called "imitating the evil."

The evil is the pride that inspired Lucifer to say in his heart, "I will ascend. . .I will exalt my throne. . .I will sit upon the mount of the congregation. . .I will be like the most high" (see Isaiah 14: 12-15) In his ambition to be foremost, Diotrephes despised the same-level brotherhood. His desire was to ascend, to be exalted, to sit over the congregation of God and to literally take the place that belongs only to God. This is "the evil." Even his name means "supported or nourished by Zeus." His whole mindset was pagan. John gave us the reason why Diotrephes was imitating evil: "He who is doing evil has not seen God." Diotrephes had never seen God reflected in the servant Christ. For if he

had, he could never have desired the preeminence. Anyone who has seen the glory of servanthood wants only the eminence of Christ.

Disenfranchised Sisters

As we look at church history, it is apparent that there has been a disenfranchisement of sisters down through the years. This disenfranchisement was in proportion to the degree that men were elevated beyond their true station as brothers. The fruit of this is still with us today.

Sadly, over time the term brother came to exclude the feminine gender, making Christianity the religion of the elite male like most of the other religions of the world. This has led to the devaluation of womankind in the ekklesia. The church set up a system of worship similar to the post-Babylonian worship in Israel, where the worshipper was distinguished by degrees of holiness defined by various areas of the temple. The temple mount was holier than the city. The terrace surrounding the inner courts was holier than the temple mount. The court of women is holier than the terrace and the court of the Israelites (men only) is holier than the court of the women. The court of the priests is holier than the court of the Israelites, etc.

We can find no court of the women in Solomon's temple. In Herod's temple the women were consigned to an outer compartment. Women were considered less holy than men, who were permitted to go beyond the court of the women into a more holy sanctum. The fact that no such example existed in the temple of Solomon leads us to conclude that this segregation was the invention of the same religionists who created the Talmud, the Meshnah, and the synagogue that Jesus referred to as "the traditions of men" and "your synagogues." The very architecture of Herod's temple reveals the general mindset men held toward woman.

The inner court was divided into two unequal parts by a cross wall running N. and S. The eastern and smaller area was the Women's Court. Here women as well as men were permitted and here were located 13 chests like inverted trumpets, into which offerings for the expenses of the temple services were placed...

In the center of these many courts within courts stood the temple itself, raised 12 steps above the Court of the Priests. Perhaps the forbidding inaccessibility of the sanctuary is in Paul's mind when he says that Christ, 'has broken down the dividing

wall of hostility' to bring the Gentiles into the fellowship of the people of God. (Eph.2:14) *The Living Bible Encyclopedia*, pp. 2007. Copyright 1968 H.S. Stuttman.

We are convinced Paul was also referring to the wall of separation and hostility between all whether they be bond nor free, Jew nor Gentile, male nor female, making one new man in Christ, a spiritual body and with no distinctions of the flesh. All are one, on the same level. All are sons! In spite of this glorious truth, it is evident that the residue of the elitism that separates male from female is still with us today in the modern church. The ground is level at the foot of the cross, but not in our traditional churches.

To say that man and woman are equal or one in Christ is not to say that they are the same. What man is not thankful that his wife is different from himself? She is gloriously and mysteriously different. When we discuss headship in the context of marriage, the oneness and equality of God's siblings must not be forgotten.

Headship

But I want you to know that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:3 LITV)

It is imperative that we first understand the context of headship exists on only four levels - God, Christ, husband and wife. Any intermediary interference is a violation of godly headship. A classic illustration of this interference is a pastor attempting to counsel or be the spiritual confidant of another man's wife, behind closed doors, feeling that as her pastor he has a responsibility and right to do this. Infidelity is often the result. In assuming headship over her, he has already come between her and her husband. In failing to understand that the man is the head of "a" woman, he violates headship on a grand scale. Mankind is not the head of womankind. If he is married, the man is the head of "a" woman. If he is not married he is the head of no woman. Here is where the thought of headship, in the context of covenant, belongs. When Paul dealt with the subject of headship he did so in the context of the covenant or marriage. This is also where he deals with the issue of submission. When Paul wrote, "submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ" (Ephesians 5:21), he did so in the context of family. He begins with the wives. "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord." (Ephesians 5:22) Then he explains why. "For the husband is the head of the wife, and Christ also is the head of the assembly, being himself the savior of the

body. But as the assembly is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their own husbands in everything." (Ephesians 5:23-24) Then Paul turns to the husbands. Hold on to your hat gentlemen!

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the assembly, and gave himself up for it; that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the assembly to himself gloriously, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. Even so ought husbands also to love their own wives as their own bodies. He who loves his own wife loves himself. For no man ever hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord also does the assembly. (Ephesians 5:25-30)

Then Paul gives us the reason behind headship.

. . . *because* we are members of his body, of his flesh and bones. "For this cause a man will leave his father and mother, and will be joined to his wife. The two will become one flesh." This mystery is great, but I speak concerning Christ and of the assembly. Nevertheless each of you must also love his own wife even as himself; and let the wife see that she respects her husband. (Ephesians 5:31-33)

Who then is the head of the single sister? Christ! How do men--married or otherwise--relate to them? The following passages in Timothy answers this.

Do not rebuke an older man but exhort him as you would a father; treat younger men like brothers, older women like mothers, younger women like sisters, in all purity. (1Timothy 5:1-2 RSV)

Paul was teaching Timothy how to relate in the family of God. Timothy was to relate to the younger brothers and sisters in the family of God as siblings and to the older ones as he would his mother and father. He is not instructed to be their head. The Greek word for sister in the above passage is *adelphē* [79], the feminine form of *adelphos* [80] (brother/brethren). Both words are from the same root *delphus* (the womb).

Clearly the head of the single sister is Christ and she is to be treated as an equal in Christ. The head or covering of the married sister is her own husband, and never another man no matter how loving and benevolent he is. Many more marriages have been destroyed than healed because of the improper relationships formed when women

let their hearts go after some "holy man" who is more than happy to be their spiritual head. When a husband sees that he has been displaced from his wife's heart by another man, even a "spiritual" one, he invariably becomes angry against the One the man represents and resents Christ Himself. This is a great evil done in the name of the gospel. This is why Peter wrote:

"Likewise you wives, be submissive to your husbands, so that some, though they do not obey the word, may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, when they see your reverent and chaste behavior." (1 Peter 3:1,2, RSV).

How can there be equality and headship at the same time? Isn't this an irreconcilable difference?

In 1 Corinthians 9:5, we find a curious scripture in which Paul reveals a strange mixture of equality and headship. "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?"

The Christian husband has a twofold responsibility toward his wife. First and foremost, she is his sister (sibling or equal), and then she is his wife. As strange as it may sound, every believing husband who is married to a believing wife is married to his sister. His first responsibility to her is to treat her with respect. He is her fellow sibling and is accountable before God for how he treats his sister.

Secondly, as her head, he is to lay down his life for her, just as Christ laid down His life for the church. Christ did not come to be served but to serve. He did not come to subjugate but to set free. Everything the husband does must be defined by this. So many of us husbands have it all wrong. We have made our wives our servants or maids. They have become subservient to our desires. They bear our children, clean our homes, cook our meals, wash the dishes, wash our clothes, shuttle the children back and forth from home and school, scratch our backs and peel us another grape as we live like kings in our little castles. It's the presumption characterized in an old country song, "Put another log on the fire, then come and tell me why you're leaving me." Husbands, if we are to lay down our lives for our wives as Christ did for the church, we must remember that Christ did this through servanthood. He is our model! He came as a servant. As modeled by Christ, true headship is servanthood.

Consider closely the words of the early Christian writer, Tertullian (A.D.160-220). In a letter to his wife, he describes the loving respect, mutuality and equality that ought to exist between a believing husbands and his wife as they serve the Lord together.

What kind of yoke is that of two believers, (partakers) of one hope, one desire, one discipline, one and the same service? Both (speaking of man and wife here) are brethren, both fellow servants, no difference of spirit or of flesh; nay, (they are) truly "two in one flesh." Where the flesh is one, one is the spirit. . . Together they pray, together prostrate themselves, together perform their fasts; mutually teaching, mutually exhorting, mutually sustaining. Equally (are they) both (found) in the Church of God; equally at the banquet of God; equally in straits, in persecutions, in refreshments. Neither hides (ought) from the other; neither shuns the other; neither is troublesome to the other. The sick is visited, the indigent relieved, with freedom. Alms (are given) without (danger of ensuing) torment; sacrifices (attended) without scruple; daily diligence (discharged) without impediment: (there is) no stealthy signing, no trembling greeting, no mute benediction. Between the two echo psalms and hymns; and they mutually challenge each other which shall better chant to their Lord. Such things when Christ sees and hears, He joys. To these He sends His own I peace. Where two (are), there withal (is) He Himself. Where He (is), there the Evil One is not. (Letter to his wife, Book II, Chapter 8)

Brothers and sisters, may we all leave this evil paradigm of lording over one another that came out of the dark ages and still governs the church.. We are all siblings in Christ. The ground at the foot of the cross is perfectly level. There is no clergy/ laity separation, no male dominance, no superior race or people. To quote Dr. Frances Schaeffer, "There are no little people and no big people in the true spiritual sense, but only consecrated and unconsecrated people. The problem for each of us is applying this truth to ourselves." (*No Little People*)

There is only family, the family of God that serves one another in His love. It was this love Paul was speaking of when he wrote,

But when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known.

And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13:10-13, NKJV).

Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:48, KJV).

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