

**Why I am a Complementarian** by Jane Tooher, 2012 (First published in Equal But Different Journal, July 2012: Issue 53)

God is graciously moving his universe towards the goal of all things being summed up under Christ (Eph 1:9-10). But this ultimate state of life has already begun, as the Father brings people to the Son, and unites them together under Christ as their head (Eph 4:1-16). Here the wonderfully rich variety of human life is brought together as each part of the body contributes in its own way towards the growth of being united under the one head. The unity we have in Christ is given concrete expression as we love and submit appropriate to the various kinds of relationships in the congregation and in the home, as the word of God dwells richly amongst us (Eph 5:21-6:4; see also e.g. Rom 12; 1 Cor 7; 11; 14; 1 Tim 2-5; Tit 2; 1 Pet 3).

None of us are called to be 'complementarian', but we are called to live in response to God's freeing word as the person that we are, and we are called to be a Christian man or a Christian woman. Because each calling is shaped by the other, then we end up being what is so suitably described as 'complementarian'. The following are some very brief reasons why I prefer 'complementarian' to some of the other terms used to describe the relationships between men and women:

(i) Egalitarianism – acknowledging there is a spectrum of beliefs for those who call themselves egalitarian, a very common defining factor is the belief that gender is not a determining factor as to the ministries someone is invited by God to do in the church or home, rather it depends more on other gifting. My reading of Scripture makes me conclude that gender is a gift from God to take into consideration at all times, and I see this as truly enriching life (e.g. Gen 1:27-29: 2:18-25; 1 Cor 11:2-16; 14:26-40; 1 Tim 2:8-15; Titus 2:1-8).

(ii) Mutuality – although there is a lot to like about this term, I'm not convinced it is as strong as complementarianism because it does not make clear whether there are any differences between the two (or more) people in the relationship, or that what they bring may be different.

(iii) Soft patriarchy – I'm not convinced that patriarchy in and of itself is wrong and I'm not convinced that a patriarchal culture has to be one that is abusive and domineering. Although I agree with male headship in the church and home that is loving, since patriarchy has so much negative connotations for so many people, especially women, I'm not persuaded that it is the best word to use when trying to describe beliefs that have to do with such sensitive issues as those surrounding the ministries of men and women, despite it being prefaced by 'soft'.

(iv) Complementarianism – although many people have no idea what it means, I think it sums up best that male and female are in a task together and by the very essence of being either male or female, they bring with them to the relationship / the task / the ministry, something that the other sex cannot bring by very virtue of their gender. Men are invited to love as Christ loved the church, and women are invited to choose to submit to male headship and help men in the task of ruling this world together. The image of God is created in this male-female complementary relation, so the image of God is not expressed so adequately by male-male, or female-female; the image of God is pre-eminently seen in the unity of male-female, working together in their complementary relationship, to fulfill the God given task of rule over the creation; an image and task that is restored in Christ. Any other unity, male-male, female-female, is a pale shadow of this fundamental reality.