



**Is complementarianism unjust?**

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>>> Is it unjust to restrict the role of elders to qualified men?

1. Is complementarianism unjust?

Why it feels unjust

The key: “servant of priests”

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The key: “servant of priests” – Martin Luther (1483-1546)

2. Complementarianism - “co-workers”

Value – Chrysostom (c. 349-407)

Voice – Charles Simeon (1759-1836)

Empowerment – Charles Simeon and Derek Prime

## **Tracing the history**

Key date: 1987 Council for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood:

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Promoting what they called *Complementarianism*: “the biblically derived view that men and women are complementary, possessing equal dignity and worth as the image of God, and called to different roles that each glorify him.”

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### Hierarchicalism and traditionalism

## **Egalitarian:**

“the principle that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities” Oxford online dictionaries

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# **Is complementarianism unjust?**

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**3) Church History**

## **Church history (cont.) - Three theories in history (Prudence Allen)**

Unisex (Plato) men and women are equal with no significant difference

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## **Church history (cont.)** - Three theories in history (Prudence Allen)

Unisex (Plato) men and women are equal with no significant difference

Complementarity (Augustine) men and women are equal and significantly different and synergistic,  $1+1=3$

Polarity (Aristotle) firstly men are superior by nature, not until Renaissance do we see arguments that women are by nature superior

The three strands of thought about the role of women are not new in 1987...

## Egalitarian

The biblically derived view that men and women are complementary, possessing equal dignity and worth as the image of God, and called to different roles that each glorify him

## Hierarchicalism and traditionalism

## Church history (cont.)

Christianity gave birth to the human rights movement (Tom Holland, *Dominion*)

Christians are for equality *and* complementarity.

**Why it feels unjust to restrict the role of elder to qualified men**

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Equal opportunities, rights and pay

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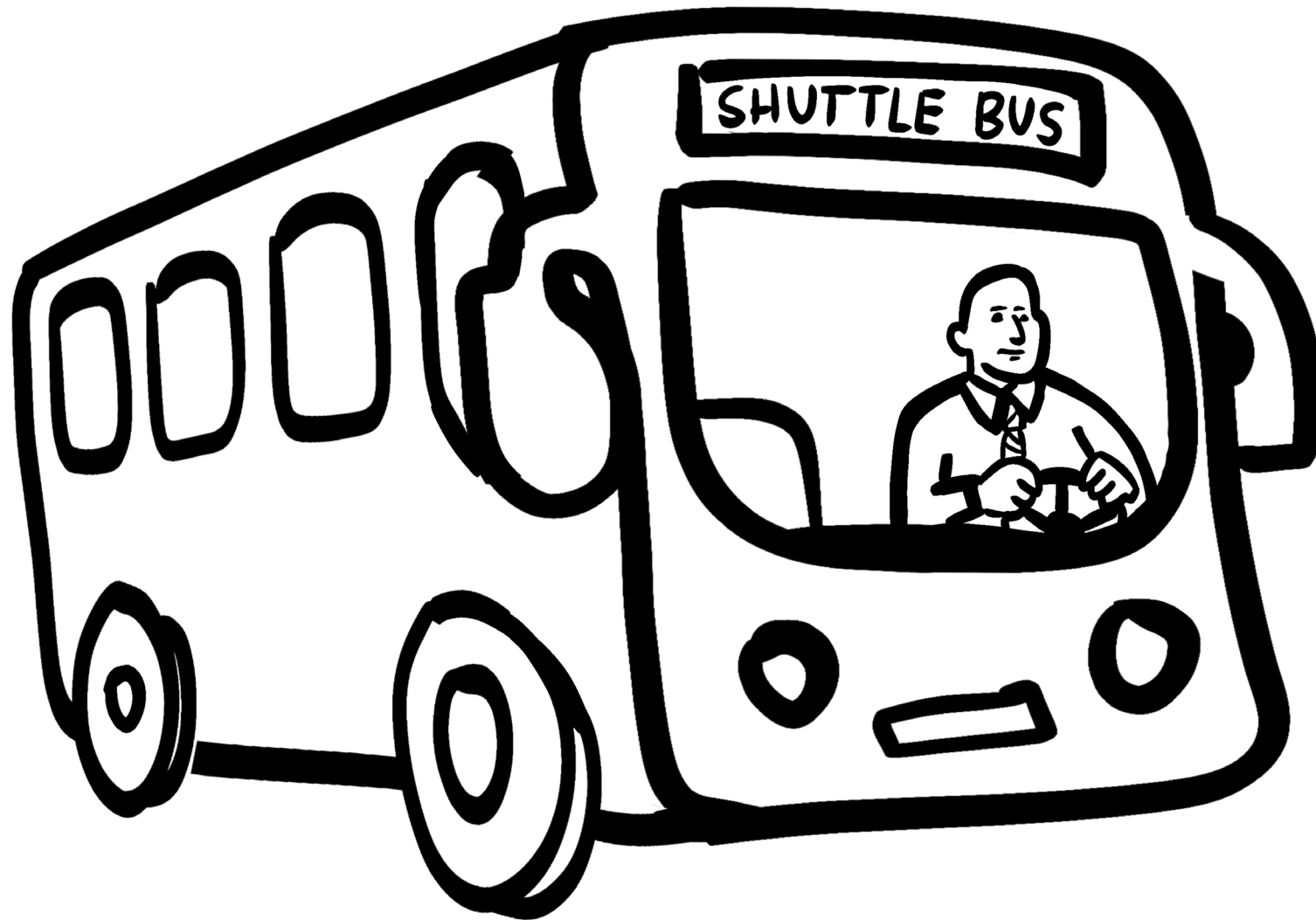
Equal opportunities, rights and pay

We associate leadership with power, status, wealth and privilege

“Ordination does not make a priest, but a servant of priests”

**Martin Luther**

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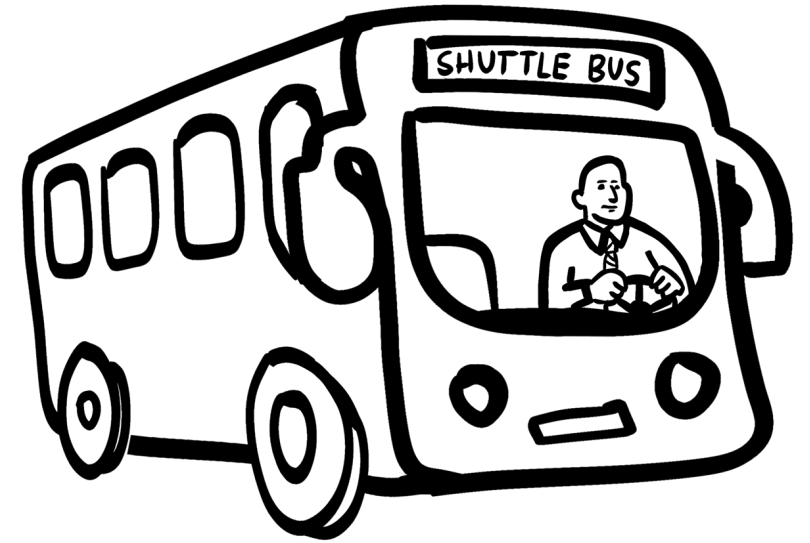




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The key: “servant of priests”



## **Defining complementarianism positively:**

“The church should show the world what the ideal relationship between the sexes should be. We should not behave as those who ask what is permissible but those who act in light of the answer to the far better question, what is beneficial and constructive?”

Derek Prime *Women in the Church*, 1992

**How would you sum up the doctrine of complementarianism?**

## How would you sum up the doctrine of complementarianism?

“Simply put, complementarianism is the belief that God made men and women equal and distinctive: equal in value and dignity, and distinctive in certain roles.” Jane Tooher and Graham Beynon, *Embracing Complementarianism*

# Complementarianism

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2. Complementarianism - “co-workers”



**Created to complement: “co-workers”**

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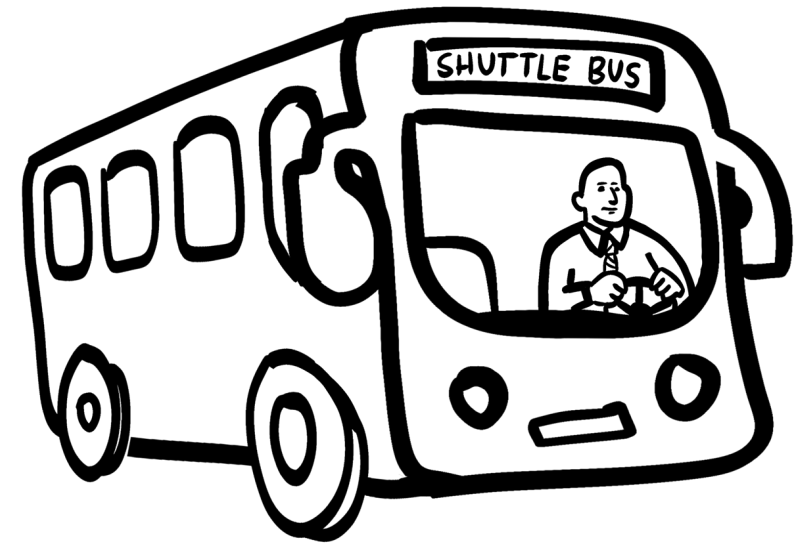
2. Complementarianism - “co-workers”

Three Indicators of justice:

Value

Voice

Empowerment



**Value**

# **Case study: Chrysostom & Deaconess Olympias**

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“there was no one in Constantinople with whom he was to have a deeper or more sympathetic understanding, no one with whom he was to feel more at ease or to whom he was to pour out his heart more unreservedly than this independent, strong willed but also intensely emotional woman.”

J. N. D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom--Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (Cornell University Press, 1998). P113

## Case study: Chrysostom's homilies (31&32) on Romans 16

Phoebe (Rom 16:1): “See how many ways [Paul] takes to give her dignity. For he has both mentioned her before all the rest, and called her sister. And it is no slight thing to be called the sister of Paul. Moreover he has added her rank, by mentioning her being deaconess.” Chrysostom: Homilies on Romans, NPNF1-13, [www.ccel.org](http://www.ccel.org), Homily 31

## Case study: Chrysostom's homilies (31&32) on Romans 16

Priscilla (Rom 16:3-4): “She is in everybody’s mouth...and all proclaim her fame...[for what] is so great, as to have been a [helper] of Paul? At her own peril to have saved the teacher of the world? ...he calls them ‘co-workers and helpers’ on this ground.”

Chrysostom: Homilies on Romans, NPNF1-13, [www.ccel.org](http://www.ccel.org), Homily 32

**Do we value men and women equally?**

## **Do we value men and women equally?**

If you show special attention to the young male graduate from Oxford, and say, 'Let's meet up for coffee,' but overlook the young woman as if she were invisible, have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? ...you have dishonoured the woman.

(from James 2:1-4,6)



Discuss: Paul mentions as many as ten women in Romans 16, how do we ensure we value men and women equally?

**Voice**

## **Voice**

Turn to Matthew 13:31-33 and/or 24:40-41

What do you notice about Jesus' teaching?

# Case study: Charles Simeon

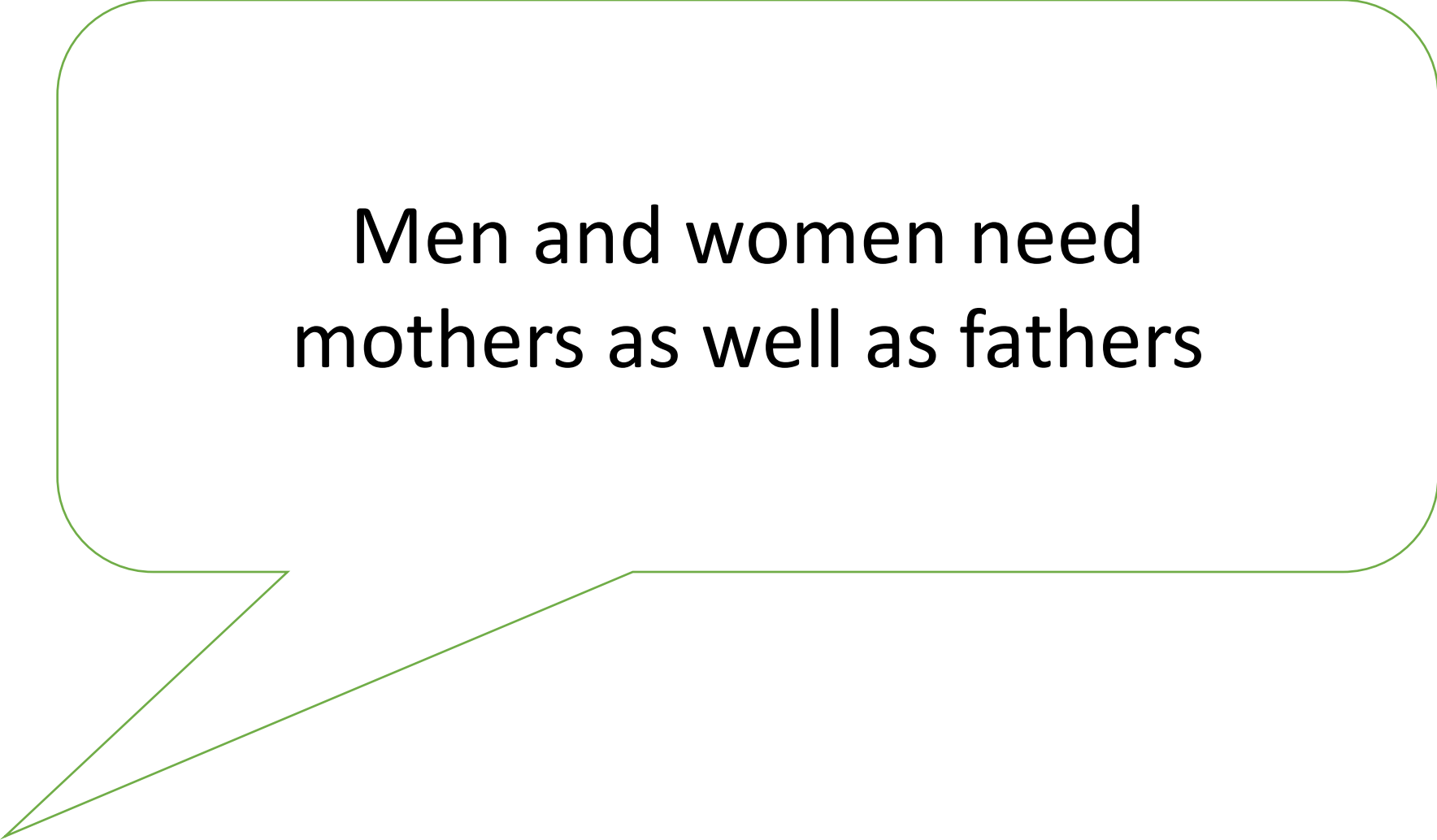
## Case study: Charles Simeon

“So strong an impression did this event make on Mr Simeon that when alluding to it thirty years after he says ‘if my whole life had been spent without any other compensation than this, my labours had been richly rewarded.’”

William Carus, Charles Simeon, *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. Charles Simeon*, 29-31

## **Case study: Charles Simeon**

“So strong an impression...”

A green speech bubble with a rounded top and a pointed tail pointing towards the bottom-left. The text inside is centered and reads: "Men and women need mothers as well as fathers".

Men and women need  
mothers as well as fathers

Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, <sup>2</sup> older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity. (1 Tim 5:1-2)



# **Education and empowerment**

## Education and empowerment

“Unfortunately, theological scholarship is not an arena into which Reformed women are encouraged to enter, so we continue to breathe a cultural air that communicates theology to be a male pursuit... if complementarity is not prevalent in Reformed thought and practice, then the tradition conflicts with itself.” Natalie Brand, “Unio Cum Christo and Reformed Complementarity, *Unio Cum Christo* 4.2 (2018): 81–93.

**What is the ministry that brings real growth?**

## **What is the ministry that brings real growth?**

“preaching is essential to the health of a church and has a prime function in facilitating its growth. But if it’s seen to be the real ministry either by design or by default – and if it’s something only men can do then we give the impression that ministry done by women is already in second place.”

Tooher and Beynon, Embracing Complementarianism. ch 7

Created to complement: “co-workers”



## **Who wrote these words?**

“Females are but too apt to underrate their influence in society.”

“Women’s gifts have been and are, frequently neglected. Some women feel insecure, devastated and robbed of their ministry.”

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Charles Simeon, *Memoirs of the Life of the Rev. Charles Simeon*, (1847) 232

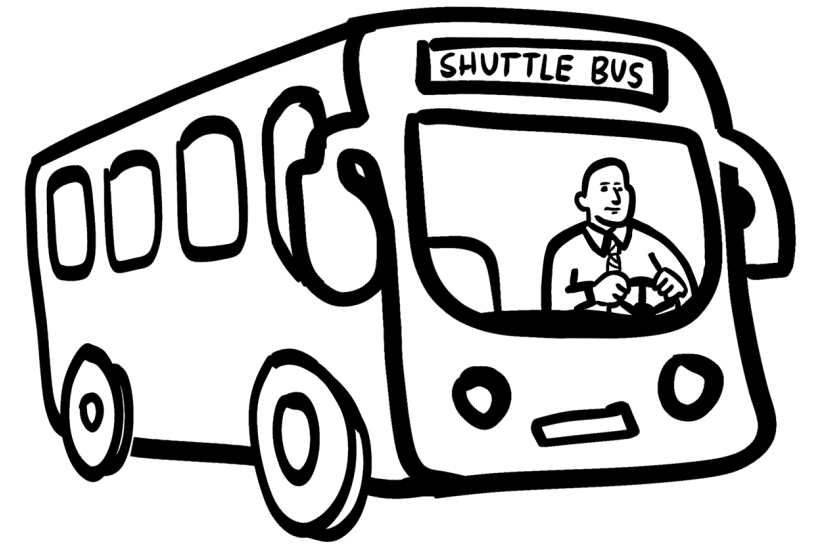
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Derek Prime, *Women in the Church* (1992) 67

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In essentials unity, in  
non-essentials liberty; in  
all things charity.

Edward Poole Connor, *Evangelical Unity* (1941). 184

