

Breaking the Dividing Walls: A Theological Reflection

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Globalization is becoming more and more a reality that cannot be ignored by the church. Increasingly, we are being faced with differences in cultures, race, ethnicity, gender roles, and life experiences that the church has been able to ignore in the past. Also, the shift of the center of Christianity is increasingly moving towards the Southern Hemisphere and away from the traditional centers of Europe and North America which is introducing multiple new perspectives.² How are we, as a church, as followers of Jesus Christ, going to deal with these differences? How can we value differences without either placing them in a ranking order or trying to manipulate them to become like something we recognize in our context?

Jesus' prayer in John 17:20-26 is that his disciples would be one just like he was one with the Father. Not only would they be one with one another and the Godhead, but also with those who would follow and believe as a result of the testimony of the disciples. This then raises questions about how we can experience this kind of oneness without the obliteration of differences. If the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are one, yet each maintains a definite uniqueness, can we also understand and value our differences?

These are the questions I want to address in this paper beginning with the perspective of Paul's letter to the Ephesians as he describes the breaking down of the dividing walls between Jews and Gentiles. I am particularly interested in the application of this passage to the understanding and valuing of differences in our leaders, and more specifically, as it relates to gender differences and women involved in the ministry of the church, both in positional leadership and volunteer or lay leadership.

The Diversity of the Church

Recently, I had the privilege of teaching a leadership training class with a group of thirty-five men and women from around the world. They were from Nigeria, Kenya, Ethiopia, Sudan and Burundi in Africa, from Nepal, Nagaland, Myanmar, Malaysia (East and West), Indonesia, and Singapore in Southeast Asia. In addition there were students from China, and the US. Furthermore, through mission and work, they represented an additional dozen countries. They ranged in age from a retired UN Commissioner from the Peace Keeping Commission to a twenty-two year old young man preparing for missionary service. Their denominational backgrounds and experiences were as varied as the countries they came from. At first glance, the diversity is the defining element of the group.

But, what do these people have in common? It is their Christian commitment to the Lord Jesus and their eagerness to establish training centers in their countries, of birth or adoption, to train indigenous leaders for the work of mission. Around our love for the Lord and commitment to his mission, the differences began to fade away as we focused on our common objectives. Yet, at the same time, we were able to ask some of the difficult questions about living out the Christian life in different contexts, leading in different cultures, and applying the difficult images and metaphors of the Bible such as servant leadership in a hierarchical cultural context.

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² Jenkins, Philip. *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity*. Oxford (2002), p. 14 (e.g.)

In the early church, we see a similar picture on the day of Pentecost. When the Holy Spirit first fell on the disciples in Jerusalem, we are told:

Now there were staying in Jerusalem God-fearing Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in bewilderment, because each one heard them speaking in his own language. Utterly amazed, they asked: “Are not all these men who are speaking Galileans? Then how is it that each of us hears them in his own native language? Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs—we hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues!” Amazed and perplexed, they asked one another, “What does this mean?” (Acts 2:5-12, NIV)

And after Peter’s sermon, we are told that three thousand believers were added to the church that day (2:41). Furthermore, Jesus’ last words to his disciples were that they would be witnesses not only in Jerusalem and Judea (their own culture), but also to Samaria (a mixed Jewish-Gentile culture) and then on “to the ends of the earth” (implying different cultures) (1:8). Here, at the very beginning, the early church is faced with the infusion of different cultural perspectives and the potential for many more.

The first encounters the church had with significant cultural differences came from the Hellenistic Jews in Jerusalem who became believers, disciples of Jesus Christ, at the time of Pentecost, many of whom were probably in that crowd at Pentecost. The differences erupt into significant “murmurings” in Acts 6 when the Grecian Jews bring a complaint against the Hebraic Jews: “their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food” (6:1). The root of the problems seems to lie in the different cultural backgrounds and experiences. The Grecian or Hellenistic Jews were those who spoke Greek as their primary language, were probably raised in the Diaspora, and were steeped in the Grecian culture. These Jews returned to Jerusalem, many of them the elderly and widows, who wished “to live out their last days in the holy city.”³ On the other hand, the Hebraic Jews were those who spoke Aramaic as their primary language and had always lived in Palestine. Since Jews ordinarily had tight families, the elderly, widowed Hebraic Jews would be more likely to have family who would care for their needs, see that they got the daily distribution of food, while those from the Diaspora would be less likely to have family to provide for their needs.⁴

The Twelve had to come up with a solution that would serve the needs of both elements of the church. Their answer was to appoint leaders from within their ranks, chosen by the Grecian Jews, responsible men who were recognized for their character, wisdom, and fullness of the Spirit (6:3, 5). They then could develop a system that fit the needs of the Grecian widows, unique to their cultural needs. This seemed to satisfy the present dissatisfactions.

So from the beginning the church was faced with different cultures, yet initially, in Jerusalem, their Jewish heritage provided the common thread that held them together.

³ C. Peter Wagner, *Acts of the Holy Spirit*. Ventura, CA: Regal Books (2000), p. 142. See also L. Howard Marshall, *Acts*. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries. Vol. 5. Downers Grove, IL: IVP (1989), p. 125-126.

⁴ Ibid.

In spite of the inclusion of Hellenistic Jews in the church (Acts 6), it took the persecutions after Stephen's martyrdom to really push the boundaries of the church beyond Jerusalem. Suddenly, Philip was preaching in Samaria, then to the Ethiopian, and ultimately along the Mediterranean coast from Azotus to Ceasarea (Acts 8). There were already believers in Damascus where Saul went to find them and bring them back for prosecution (9:1-2). Peter was summoned, by the Spirit, to the household of Cornelius where the Holy Spirit fell on there Roman God-fearers just as he did on the disciples in Jerusalem (10:44-46). Next, the disciples heard reports of believers in Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch were telling the message not only to other Jews, but also to the Gentiles (11:19-20). It is in this location that Barnabas and Saul began their ministry among the Gentiles, and from here that they were sent out to the Greco-Roman world on their missionary journeys (11:22-26; 13:1-3). In less than two decades the church has expanded from the center at Jerusalem to places into the Greco-Roman world, all around the Mediterranean .

As the Council of Jerusalem attests (Acts 15), the expansion of the Christian movement across the significant cultural barriers was not easy as questions of belief and practice arose in the new churches around the Greco-Roman world. How could believers from such diverse backgrounds, backgrounds that had been hostile to one another for generations, come together? There were hostilities, animosities, cultural practices that were deep-rooted, creating what would appear to be insurmountable barriers. On the basis of Peter's testimony of God's intervention at Cornelius' home (15:7-9), and his understanding of salvation by grace rather than the works or burden of the law (15:10-11), the assembly listened to the miraculous encounters of Barnabas and Paul as they had traveled and preached among the Gentiles (15:12).

James finally draws the assembly to a conclusion, based on a scriptural foundation, as they all agree not to impose the Jewish Law on the Gentile converts, asking only that they "abstain from food polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood," which seemed reasonable to all involved (15:13-21). The letter that emerged from this gathering became a foundation for further expansion of the church throughout the Mediterranean world.

David Strong suggests that Luke, in his reporting of the council, is emphasizing the importance of mission:

Luke's primary purpose is to underscore the fact that the Jerusalem church embraced the Gentile mission, a decision that enabled the church to continue growing to the ends of the earth. In the process Luke prioritizes mission over cultural constraints.⁵

This decision is in contrast to the cultural tendency, still common today, "to prioritize cultural constraints over mission."⁶

In his conclusion, Strong argues that our goal in mission needs to be to focus first on "whether a people has places its faith in Jesus Christ and whether there is evidence that it has

⁵ David K. Strong. "The Jerusalem Council: Some Implications for Contextualization." In *Mission in Acts: Ancient Narratives in Contemporary Context*. Robert L. Gallagher and Paul Hertig, eds. Orbis (2004) p 197.

⁶ Ibid.

done so,”⁷ and then to prioritize decisions related to behavior based on the need to build bridges and relationships for fellowship.

“Although Gentiles were free from the demands of the ritual law, they should surrender that right for the sake of fellowship with their Jewish brothers and sisters [e.g. restraint from meat offered to idols]. The decrees [of the council] would thus prioritize the need for harmonious fellowship over individual freedom.”⁸

Strong is suggesting that there was a give-and-take on both sides in order to build a relationship that allows for the experience of a unity in fellowship around the table, and not just the existence of two different but equal branches of the church. The Jews gave on the demand to meet all the requirements of the law, and the Gentiles would agree to follow the particular laws related idol and temple worship that were offensive to Jews.

This decision of the Jerusalem Council, to welcome the Gentiles into fellowship without adding additional requirements to their conversion beyond allegiance to the Lord Jesus, was then communicated to the Gentile world through the letter and the messengers sent from Jerusalem.

The Ephesian Moment

The letter to the Ephesians addresses this very issue, from a theological perspective, making bold claims that in Christ there is a new creation that does indeed break down the hostility and dividing walls between opposing groups, even those who have been hostile enemies for generations. The letter speaks to the issue first by describing the love of God for the creation and the intention of adopting a people, chosen from the foundation of the world (1:3-14). Then it details the events and extent to which God went to make this happen through the life and death of Jesus Christ (2:1-10), and finally spells out the implications of this salvation for the horizontal relationships between all people, including the Jews and the Gentiles (2:11-22).

The letter begins with a section of exaltation and praise of what God has done: chosen us long ago (1:4), and has planned that we should be adopted children, so it is not an accident that we are part of his Kingdom (1:5). Then to emphasize the point, the writer says it is God’s pleasure, God’s will, which has been freely given (1:5-6). As a result God desires to lavish us not only with redemption, but also with riches, good gifts, wisdom, and revelation of eternal mysteries (1:3, 7-9). Then to emphasize this point, the writer says again it is God’s pleasure to do all this (1:10)! Indeed we are heirs because this is God’s will, God’s plan from the beginning (1:11-12) and to prove this is so, God has given us a promise, a guarantee through the gift of the Holy Spirit (1:13-14). The writer cannot seem to find enough superlatives to emphasize this point that God loves us enough to include us as part of his family, the Kingdom of God and that relationship is extraordinarily blessed.

The author of Ephesians has gone to great lengths to describe God’s intention and purpose in drawing not only the Jews, but also the Gentiles, i.e. the Ephesians and others who would have received this letter, into an intentional relationship as heirs of the Kingdom, as participants in glory, something beyond what most of us can imagine. The writer is describing a new connectedness with the God of the universe that has the intimate connections of a parent and child, parent and heirs, one where blessings are meant to flow from a loving, gift-giving parent to

⁷ Ibid. p. 203.

⁸ Ibid. p. 204.

the child that is loved and adored. It is a relationship of choice, adoption, not of obligation due to blood line.

There is a wonder and awe in this that overwhelms the mind, so that the writer then offers this prayer that God may give us “the spirit of wisdom and revelation that you may know [God] better” (1:17)! We cannot even grasp this without the help of the Holy Spirit at work in our hearts.

In Ephesians 2, the author goes on to describe how this relationship is possible. Even in describing the lostness of humanity, both Jews and Gentiles are included. The author uses “us” and “we” not simply “you” Gentiles in describing the devastation of sin and the broken relationship between God and humanity (2:1-3). Both Jews and Gentiles are really in the same position when it comes to salvation, showing how neither one earns salvation, all of us follow the desires of our flesh. This is our natural bent and thus all, both Jews and Gentiles, should be the “objects of wrath” (2:3). In the natural there is no reason why God should love us, but the good news is that God does and the greatness of this love is expressed in that before we could do anything to prove our worth or earn his love, God has acted in our behalf. It is only God’s goodness and mercy that makes forgiveness possible (2:4). We can never say we have earned it, nor do we deserve it, “For it is by grace you have been saved through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so no one can boast” (2:9-10). Neither Jew nor Gentile has any special claim to this new relationship, only those who enter it by faith—and that is open to all without preconditions for earning or deserving it.

But if we stop here, counting our blessings, we miss the point of the gospel message. The Gospel message is not only about God’s personal salvation, his blessing on the lives of individuals, a very Western perspective, but the Gospel is about a commitment to God’s purposes, to being Kingdom servants, to being committed to a community of believers who are going to make a difference in the world, because that is what God has called us to do and be.⁹

The writer then turns our attention to the implications of what God has done through these acts of love in Jesus Christ. We have not been called into a new relationship simply to rest in the blessings, to lounge in the lavishness of these good gifts, or to boast of a new title or privilege, but rather God has a greater purpose for us: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (2:10). The new vertical relationship to God has horizontal implications towards one another. So the question of unity in Christ is raised, which has echoes of Jesus’ prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane: “My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that they may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me” (Jn 17:20-21).

How is it possible to be one in Christ when there are such huge differences between the Jews and the Gentiles? The outward sign of circumcision was signified the covenant of God for those who were “in” and those who were “out”—the Jews were “in” and the Gentiles were “out” and they both knew it. The Gentiles were indeed “far away” (2:13). The writer describes this as the dividing wall of hostility (2:14). It is a hedge, a wall that “separates, prevents two from

⁹ Brownson, James V., Inagrace T. Dietterich, Barry, A. Harvey, and Charles C. West. *StormFront: The Good News of God*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans (2003) p. 51-52 (e.g.). The theme of the entire book is a challenge to the church, particularly in America, to take seriously the commitment to mission and the sacrifice to make it happen.

coming together.”¹⁰ The point is then emphasized by calling it a dividing wall that was created and sustained by hatred (2:14-15). The writer has used three different words, barrier, dividing wall, and hostility, to describe the negative strength of this division, this chasm, between these two groups of people. But the good news is that this barrier is destroyed, loosed, dissolved¹¹

The answer is that they are now one in Christ. He is the “peace” which has destroyed this barrier. In his death he has annulled the law which created the separation and created something entirely new (2:15). This is not a matter of patching up relationships or creating some kind of amnesty, but a totally new creation where both are on an equal footing. The old wall is now gone. Those who are “far away” and those who are “near” now “both have access to the Father by one Spirit” (2:18). Thus, no matter what the cultural background of the person, the new believer is one with all others in the Body of Christ. While there remain distinctions based on culture, race, ethnicity, these do not prohibit the two different cultures from coming together in fellowship, the fellowship meal being the primary example.

What then are the implications of such a new creation? Our first response may be, “Wait a minute. These kind of differences run too deep. Can this really happen? Can we overcome these kind of differences that are so ingrained in our thinking, our cultures, our way of life?”

Andrew Walls suggests that each time the Gospel messages crosses into another culture, the church’s experience of the purposes of God becomes richer. Each culture begins to ask new and different questions about God, his nature, his work in the lives of believers. Because they do, our image of God can be expanded also, if we are willing to listen to the questions that our brothers and sisters from other cultures are asking.

Each Christian lifestyle, representing a culture converted to Christ, expressed something that the whole body needed. Hellenistic Christianity was not a Torahless soft option for benighted heathen who could do no better, as some Jerusalem believers undoubtedly thought it. Not was Judaic Christianity a system of legalistic bondage for people who had never known the benefits of a cosmopolitan culture, as some Hellenistic believers may have thought. Not was it the case that each was an authentic form of Christian faith complete and valid in itself, apart from the other. Each was necessary to the other, each was necessary to complete and correct the other; for each was an expression of Christ under certain specific conditions, and Christ is humanity completed.¹²

Furthermore, Walls argues that the different expressions of Christian faith are not intended to be different lifestyles, separated by culture or ethnicity. Rather there is to be a unity, a coming together that transcends the diversity, yet does not deny the differences, but rather embraces them.

But the very diversity was part of the church’s unity. The church must be diverse because humanity is diverse; it must be one because Christ is one...It is a

¹⁰Strong, J. 1996. *The exhaustive concordance of the Bible : Showing every word of the test of the common English version of the canonical books, and every occurrence of each word in regular order.* (electronic ed.). Woodside Bible Fellowship. Ontario, #G5418.

¹¹ Ibid, #G3089.

¹² Andrew F. Walls. *The Cross-Cultural Process in Christian History: Studies in the Transmission and Appropriation of Faith.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis (2002). p.78.

celebration of the union of irreconcilable entities, the breaking down of the wall of partition brought about by Christ's death (Eph 2:13-18). Believers from the different communities are different bricks being used for the construction of a single building—a temple where the One God would live (Eph 2:19-22).¹³

In the next section I wish to examine the application of this same principle to gender relationships within the Body. Can men and women learn from one another in the same ways, enriching the body of believers as they learn from one another and commit to working together in new relationships.

Women in Leadership

In the New Testament, we see the struggle to live out this new theological understanding in the relationship between the Jews and the Gentiles, particularly as it related to meal fellowship together.¹⁴ However, I would like to explore the application and implications for gender relationships and how an understanding and valuing of differences might enhance the mission of the church as men and women learn to work together rather than in separate domains or at cross-purposes to one another.

For the past several decades there has been a lot written about the appropriate roles in the church for women, raising the question as to what levels or types of ministry God has designed for women. While there is variation in positions along a continuum, there are really only two basic theological positions.

In brief, the complementarian position argues that man and woman were created differently, for different purposes requiring separate roles. Based on their interpretation of the creation story in Genesis 2 and 1 Timothy 2:12, these writers contend that women were created to be the followers and not the leaders. Men are the leaders, men are the teachers, women are not to hold positions of authority.¹⁵ While they may differ in the kinds of positions and opportunities they would deem proper for women, all would agree that women ultimately operate and lead under the authority of male leadership, and thus would not be allowed to be senior pastors or in other top leadership positions.

On the other side are those who believe that women should lead according to their giftedness and the call that God has on their lives. They would argue from the creation account in Genesis 1:26-28, that both men and women are to reflect the image of God and both together were commissioned to have dominion over the earth and multiply. Likewise in the new covenant, Galatians 3:28 demonstrates that the previous barriers between the socially divided groups were now done away with in Christ—not only barriers between Jews and Gentiles, but also slaves and free, and male and female.¹⁶ From this perspective, both women and men might function at any level of positional leadership, based on their giftedness, not gender.

¹³ Ibid. p. 77.

¹⁴ See Galatians 2:11-21, Paul's description of his encounter with Peter over this very issue.

¹⁵ See Piper, John and Wayne Grudem, eds. *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books (1991), Hurley, James. *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan (1981), and Kostenberger, Andreas J., Thomas R. Schreiner, and H. Scott Baldwin, eds. *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books (1995).

¹⁶ See Groothuis, Rebecca Merrill. *Good News for Women: A Biblical Perspective of Gender Equality*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books (1997), Scholer, David "Galatians 3:28 and the Ministry of Women in the Church."

Linda Belleville's detailed analysis of the context, culture, and Greek language and grammar of 1Timothy 2:11-15, gives ample evidence that this passage is a reflection of cultural issues in Ephesus in the first century. Teaching "was an activity and not an office...It was a gift and not a position of authority."¹⁷ She sums up her arguments by noting that writer of this letter is "prohibiting teaching that tries to get the upper hand and not teaching per se."¹⁸ If this then is the case, then both men and women would have been allowed to be teachers as God gifted and called them, and as they were able to do so without trying to "gain mastery over" or "with a view to dominating" other people, men included.¹⁹

Returning to the Ephesian Moment, I want to examine a case study example of how the working together of women and men in the context of a church can increase the vibrancy and effectiveness of a group of people because they begin to embrace others who are different.²⁰ Consider a denominational church that was very traditional in the late 1970s. All their governing boards were male; women's roles were primarily in the kitchen and nursery, while men handled everything else. At that time the pastor began to catch a vision for involving women in more opportunities within the church. As he began teaching, first the governing boards, and then the whole congregation about what Scripture taught about women serving in the body of Christ, the boards decided to allow women to serve communion, not just prepare it. Shortly after that they changed the by-laws to allow women to be on the boards.

These two simple steps began to bring significant changes. Women experienced a new sense of self-worth as they served communion along side the men. Young girls began seeing new models of leadership that gave them vision for something new and different. Then as women began to serve on the boards, they brought a fresh new life. Where it had been the same group of men cycling through the different boards, now there were more than double the number of potential deacons, elders, and trustees. Women took their new appointments seriously, and began doing their homework, studying the issues and what would be required of them. They began asking different questions, coming up with new ideas, and the men were suddenly challenged to take their responsibilities more seriously also. The result was a whole new excitement in the church, a new sense of expectation about what they could do and be as believers. New programs emerged, new activities to serve the community. Over the next decade they became a multi-ethnic church as they began to become more involved in their changing neighborhoods. Their whole ministry became enriched because they broke down the gender barrier, creating opportunities for women in new areas of leadership, listening to their questions and input as well, serving their church and their community together rather than in the old gender-separated patterns.

Some time after this, the church hired a new intern, a woman from the local seminary. This was a new challenge because they had never seen a female pastor before. When she graduated from seminary, the church ordained her and hired her as their assistant pastor. At that

Covenant Quarterly 56(3):2-18 (1998), and Belleville, Linda. *Women Leaders and the Church: Three Crucial Questions*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books (1999).

¹⁷ Belleville, Linda. "Exegetical Fallacies in Interpreting 1 Timothy 2:11-15." *Priscilla Papers* 17:3-11 (Summer 2003), p. 8.

¹⁸ Ibid, p. 9.

¹⁹ Ibid, p. 7.

²⁰ The case study is a conflation of several different contexts, disguised to protect the people involved. For more information related to this and similar studies see Glanville, Elizabeth. "Leadership Development for Women in Christian Ministry." PhD dissertation, Fuller Theological Seminary, Pasadena, CA (2000).

time the pastor made the crucial decision not to assign her responsibilities according to traditional gender stereotypes. Thus, she was not called assistant pastor in charge of women's ministries, or Christian education, or even family ministry. Instead she was given opportunities to preach, perform weddings and funerals, to participate in hospital visitation and all the activities of ministry in a local congregation. Tasks and responsibilities were assigned according to her giftedness and interests. The congregation learned to appreciate both as "our pastors."

The church has noted a number of benefits that have come from breaking down the gender dividing wall. By having both a man and a woman (not a married couple) as pastors, they have found the leadership is much more aware and in touch with the needs of the congregation. Together they are able to serve a broader spectrum of people than either one could do alone. Young women and men both have models of leadership and a model of effective teamwork that honors both genders. The breaking down of the gender barrier has had the additional benefits of being a model for breaking down other barriers including class, race, and ethnicity. The church has had a taste of the unity that Jesus prayed for in John 17.

Note that these changes did not happen automatically. They took time and commitment on the part of both leaders and the congregation. Carol Becker outlines specific criteria that enable mixed-gender teams to function effectively together.²¹ The criteria of inclusion closely connects with the breaking down of the dividing walls. For her, this means dealing with prejudice, "any unfounded attitude we may have that prevents us from truly knowing the unknown other, whether that person is of the opposite sex, another racial or cultural heritage, or even a different age, or different capability."²² By dealing with the prejudices, we are able to build trust and relationships that will embrace and honor diversity without giving preference to one gender, race, or culture.²³ Becker's work provides additional evidence and practical steps as to how women and men can learn to work effectively together and reap the benefits of diversity in the context of ministry together.

In summary, what can we learn that would encourage the working together of men and women in leadership, whether it is in the church, in missionary service, in cross-cultural teams, or other contexts? Walls' understanding of the breaking down of the dividing walls between the Jews and the Gentiles would suggest the following for the breaking down of the gender walls:

1. Men and women can be compared to two different cultures with different worldviews that do not naturally understand one another.
2. Men and women are on equal standing before God as sinners, redeemed through the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross.
3. If female and male perspectives are built on different experiences and perceptions of reality, both can contribute to a deeper understanding of God and his relationships with his people. One without the other is incomplete because God created both male and female to reflect his image, not just one.

²¹ The nine criteria are reflect, learn, believe, name, include, communicate, work, influence, and model. Becker, Carol. *Becoming Colleagues: Women and Men Serving Together in Faith*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass (2000), p. 10-17.

²² Ibid, p. 158.

²³ Ibid, p. 160-161.

4. This implies a need on the part of both genders to listen closely to the other, to allow each contribute to the conversation, to raise questions that need attention.
5. Likewise, it is valuable to recognize that both women and men bring unique gifts to the Body of Christ, and that the same gift will be expressed differently in different people, male or female, and should not be dismissed on the basis of gender.
6. Diversity enriches the Body and does not need to divide the Body. Thus diversity of perceived gendered expressions of leadership will enrich the entire Body as we embrace them.
7. Since no one culture is the perfect expression of the Kingdom and work of God in this world, neither is either gender the perfect expression of the image and work of God. We need to understand and embrace the feminine characteristics of God as well as the male characteristics if we are to grow towards a complete picture of all that God is.
8. We will be more likely to be able to avoid Walls two dangers: the “instinctive desire to protect our own version of the Christian faith,” and the “liberty to enjoy our own [version] in isolation from all the others.”²⁴

In conclusion, I am drawn back to Walls' vision of a church, who because she encounters the breaking down of walls that separate in the Ephesian Moment, is “more culturally diverse than it has ever been before; potentially, therefore, nearer to that ‘full stature of Christ’ that belongs to this summing up of humanity....The Ephesian question at the Ephesian moment is whether or not the church in all its diversity will demonstrate its unity by the interactive participation of all its cultural-specific segments, the interactive participation that is to be expected in a functioning body.”²⁵ Likewise if we can learn to value the different life-experiences and perspectives that women bring to the church, the church be enriched and enabled to expand its mission more effectively.

²⁴ Walls, pp. 78-79.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 81.