

Load-Bearing Walls

By Carolyn Custis James

You don't have to be an engineer or a building contractor to know that some walls are more important than others. Do-it-yourself home renovators learn the hard way not to tamper with load-bearing walls. Pull out the load bearing walls, and you'll bring the roof down. So before you start demolition on a home improvement project, make sure you know which are the load-bearing walls and leave them alone.

God designed the world to stand on two load-bearing walls. The first load bearing wall is God's relationship with his image bearers. Without this vital relationship, we are cut off from our life supply – homeless, stranded souls in the universe, left to guess at who we are and why we are here. The second load-bearing wall is the Blessed Alliance between male and female. According to Genesis, male/female relationships aren't simply necessary to perpetuate the human race and make life pleasurable and interesting.

Male/female relationships are *strategic*. God laid out his game plan in Genesis, and the team he assembled to do the job was male and female. Men and women working together actually predates men working with men and women working with women. It would be one thing if God confined this male/female team to home and family and then mapped out the remaining territory into separate spheres for men and for women. But he didn't do that. Their mission – *together* – is to rule and subdue the whole earth on his behalf. Men and women together. Our relationships with God and with each other are the load-bearing walls of God's original design.

This foundational truth elevates the seriousness of the Blessed Alliance well beyond men "making room" for women and trying to tweak the system here and there to keep us happy. Much deeper kingdom issues are at stake than resolving debates over disputed passages, deciding who's in charge, resolving conflict, defining his and her roles, and dividing the proverbial pie so everyone gets their fair share. God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone." This statement means our brothers cannot be the men God created them to be or do the job God is calling them to do without their sisters. Together, we are God's preferred

method of getting things done in the world. He created his image bearers male and female, blessed them, and spread before them the global mandate to build his kingdom.

A lot is riding in this Blessed Alliance. First, *God's reputation is on the line*. People are supposed to find out what God is like from what they see in us both as individuals and together. It is not going too far to say that we are participants in divine revelation. When male/female relationships in the church are uneasy and distrustful, when we splinter, divide, and cautiously hold one another at arm's length, we are sending false messages to the world of what God is like. When men are called to full-fledged kingdom living but the other half of the church is asked to sit on the sidelines, there is no Blessed Alliance, the bride of Christ limps, and we misrepresent God's oneness.

Second, *our identity and flourishing as human beings hinge on the Blessed Alliance*. God created us to need each other. Male/female relationships are designed to enable us to become our best selves. We'll see hard evidence of this in a moment.

Third, put bluntly – *God's kingdom is at stake*. Carving out a kingdom in a fallen world is our God-given mission. We cannot afford for anyone to hold back. The seriousness of our cause is urgent. Passivity or even a partial effort is unconscionable. The Blessed Alliance is God's strategy for getting the job done. There is surprising God-intended strength and wisdom for all of us when men and women join forces and serve God together. God's purposes for the world are built on these two load-bearing walls.

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