

THE FEMINIZATION OF CHRISTIANITY

SHEPHERD OF THE SPRINGS LUTHERAN CHURCH

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MAY 2024



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THESIS: When it comes to membership, participation, and spiritual nurture in our churches, men (especially men who are highly masculine) are in scarce supply. Our churches' membership, participation, and spiritual nurturing are dominated by women, children, and male pastors. This is not a new condition in the churches of Western Christianity and is the result of long existing factors that are theological, cultural, and pervasive - some dating back to the 13th century.

While Lutheran theology offers many correctives, our churches nevertheless seem to suffer from the same demographics of low masculine involvement; and they have for generations. It is time for us to understand what some of these factors are and what can be done to bring men back into an active involvement with faith life in the Church, in our families, and in the world.

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OUR STUDY WILL COVER . . .

- SOME CONTEMPORARY CHURCH DEMOGRAPHICS
- MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY CLARIFIED
- THE GENDER BALANCE OF THE CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT
- THE MASCULINE LIFE OF FAITH AND FAITHFULNESS IN THE IMAGE OF CHRIST
- THE FEMINIZATION OF WESTERN CHRISTIANITY
- GENDER BALANCE RESTORED BY LUTHER AND THE WITTENBERG REFORMATION
- THE LOSS OF GENDER BALANCE IN NORTH AMERICAN LUTHERANISM

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SOME CONTEMPORARY CHURCH DEMOGRAPHICS



WOMEN TYPICALLY DOMINATE THE CHURCHES IN OUR COUNTRY TODAY
THEY OUTNUMBER MEN . . . IN THEIR PRESENCE.

PRESENCE (Barna survey data)

- Typical worship attendance is 61% female, 39% male
- 13 million more women than men will worship on a given Sunday.
- 25% of married women will worship without their husbands.
- Mid-week activities draw about 70 – 80% women.
- Other than pastors, the majority of church employees are women.
- 70% of boys being raised in the church will abandon it during teens and twenties.
- Christian universities are populated 2 to 1, women over men.

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SOME CONTEMPORARY CHURCH DEMOGRAPHICS



WOMEN TYPICALLY DOMINATE THE CHURCHES IN OUR COUNTRY TODAY
THEY OUTNUMBER MEN . . . IN THEIR PARTICIPATION.

PARTICIPATION: WOMEN ARE . . .

- 100% more likely to be involved in programs of Christian nurture
- 57% more likely to participate in adult education programs
- 56% more likely to hold positions of spiritual leadership (other than pastors)
- 40 % more likely to have personal devotional time and Bible reading

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SOME CONTEMPORARY CHURCH DEMOGRAPHICS



WOMEN TYPICALLY DOMINATE THE CHURCHES IN OUR COUNTRY TODAY
THEY OUTNUMBER MEN . . . IN THEIR PERSONALITY.

PERSONALITY

Predominance of men involved in Church tend to be more passive
with type B personalities.

Men (and women) with Type A masculine personalities tend more to
shy away from Church.

- Most men and boys are introduced to the Christian faith by women
- Most nurture of boys in the faith from pre-school, Sunday school, and parochial elementary school is carried out by women.
- Active men in our churches tend to become involved only with the physical, financial, and logistical operations of the congregation.
- Men tend to shy away spiritual involvement beyond attending worship.

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MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY CLARIFIED



MALENESS AND MASCULINITY – NOT THE SAME THING.

- *Maleness* is a physical or biological category and distinction.
- *Masculinity* relates to matters of gender = everything about being man that is not body: identity, a way of acting and living, mental qualities (cultural and spiritual qualities).
- Masculine is always referenced and understood over against what is feminine.
- A man must be willing to fight and inflict pain – but also suffer and endure pain (Jesus) To be ready to give up his life. Self-affirmation is almost in a self-abnegation. Jesus talked about losing your life to find and gain it . . . the acceptance of expendability, risk-taking, and self-sacrifice for others.

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MASCULINITY AND FEMININITY CLARIFIED



FEMALENESS AND FEMININITY – NOT THE SAME THING

- Femaleness is a physical or biological category and distinction.
- Feminine = contact, openness, communion – aim of communion is union.
- Feminine: continual unity, Active receptivity (not passive)
- Women face danger in childbirth – and not a choice. Men must make the choice.

Biblical Christianity would affirm Jesus as the ultimate embodiment of masculinity. His love compels him to confront the powers of evil, conquer them in death, but in his resurrection, return to his bride, the Church, as King and spouse.

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WHICH DO MOST ASSOCIATE WITH CHRISTIAN VALUES?



LEFT SET	RIGHT SET
Competence	Love
Power	Communication
Efficiency	Beauty
Achievement	Relationships
Skills	Support
Proving Oneself	Help
Results	Nurturing
Accomplishment	Feelings
Objects	Sharing
Technology	Relating
Goal-oriented	Harmony
Self-sufficiency	Community
Success	Loving cooperation
Competition	Personal expression

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Nursery	Toddlers	Child Care	Elder Care	Soup Kitchen	Women's Ministry
K-1st Grade Teacher	2nd-3rd Grade Teacher	4th-5th Grad Teacher	Jr. High Teacher	Sr. High Teacher	Adult Ed. Teacher
Youth Group	Women's circles	Prayer Ministry	Small Group Facilitator	Hospital Visitation	Support Groups
Flowers	Coffee	Weddings	Funerals	Showers	Potlucks
Usher	Committee Work	Building and Grounds	Financial	Choir	Organist

O = women best suited to serve, **X** = men best suited to serve

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JESUS: THE ULTIMATE EXAMPLE OF MANLY MASCULINITY



- Human masculinity in the NT is to provide protection and provision for community and to fend off the forces of evil; the world and the Devil in a life of spiritual warfare.
- Jesus born of woman, separates from her to suffer and die sacrificially for the welfare of all – and then to return victorious to claim and unite with his Bride, the Church.
- As the Father sent his Son, the Son sends men to suffer and die for His people. The Apostolic office and martyrdom were very closely related.
- Paul set up the relationship between husband and wife as that of Christ and His Church characterized by love and sacrifice (masculine) with love and obedience (feminine). (Eph. 5:22-25)
- The husband sacrifices for his wife and family as the wife sacrifices for the children.

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QUESTIONS???

