

Review: Confronting Sexism in the Church: How We Got Here and What We Can Do About It

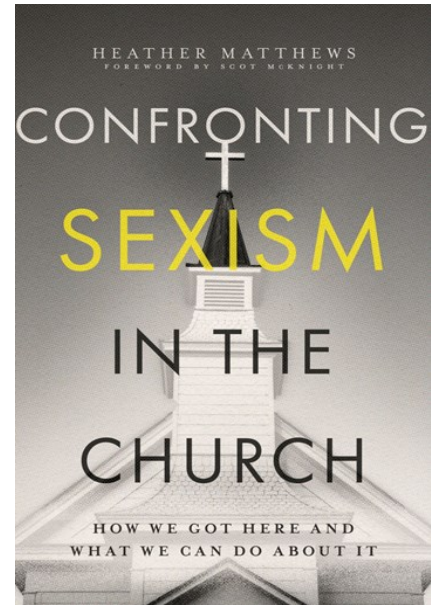
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Confronting Sexism in the Church: How We Got Here and What We Can Do About It

By Heather Matthews (IVP)

Quite a few books attempting to describe and discharge the subjugation of women in the church have been written in recent years. Some of these books look at the issue from a biblical perspective, others a feminist perspective, and still others from the perspective of influential, faithful men—allies who hope to help right a wrong.

Some of these books are more helpful than others in reaching the audience Matthews notes most needs to hear, to understand, the reach and impact of sexism in the church—within evangelical Christianity most especially, where sexism is “baked into the cake.” That audience is men.



Matthews has this audience in mind as she writes. At times sharing personal stories, she tackles the topic as a caring, well-informed sister.

In the first half of the book, she defines sexism, discusses the theology of sexism, provides brief histories of sexism and antisexism in the church, elaborates on the price women pay, and discusses factors that have contributed to sexism’s perpetuation.

While an honest conversation about sexism in the church cannot be undertaken without using the word “patriarchy,” she seems mindful of overusing language that might keep some in her target audience from hearing the truth of what she has to say. So, if that word bothers you, don’t stop reading when you get to it.

That’s not to say reading this book won’t be uncomfortable for some—men or women, who were raised in the overt sexism of the Southern Baptist Convention, as was Matthews, or other denominations of similar mindsets. But God doesn’t call us to be comfortable. He calls us to grace—grace to learn and listen—and grace to confront practices which harm women *and* the entire community of the faithful.

In the second half of the book, Matthews offers suggestions on beginning to confront the “malignancy” of sexism in our churches, in a variety of ways and levels.

There is hope for change, because “God sees women,” Matthews asserts. And he’s working in the world to have the *imago Dei* in women honored fully.

Matthews doesn’t deal with “difficult” Scriptures. If you’re looking for help with those, you’ll need to look elsewhere. But if you’re looking for practical, accessible help in understanding and addressing sexism in the church, add this book to your library.

Calli Keener

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