**Gender Equity and Empowerment in Education from a Judeo-Christian Perspective**

PHI 815 History of the Integration of Religion and Society

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 March 9, 2025

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**Assignment #3 – Essay**

1. Write a 5-page essay that analyzes the following items:
	1. Introduction of the Present Issue: Begin with a contemporary social issue that has a (probably unappreciated) history of positive Judeo-Christian response to it.
	2. Body Sections:
		1. Biblical Worldview Perspective: Locate the issue in the progress of Biblical revelation and explain the foundations of a Judeo-Christian perspective. What is a biblical/theological position on this issue based on sound biblical interpretation?
		2. History of the Issue: Trace the development of the selected issue alongside the history of Christianity's social impact on it. Summarize the historical trend at different points in history with an eye to identifying significant causes of the social problem, identifiable processes at work, and enduring patterns that emerged. How did the problem/issue originate and develop? What were the causes of the social problem? What identifiable sociological or theological processes were at work? What enduring patterns emerged that recur?
		3. Exemplars of Religion and Society Integration: Present a specific example (e.g. key leader(s) or movement(s) of socially and intellectually active Christians) of religion and society integration. If known, discuss how God raised up the leader or movement.
		4. Applicable Principles: Distill the timeless principles of truth or leadership derived from the historical examples above. (Develop these based on the Body Sections #1-#3). Pose possible contemporary applications for the integration of religion and society in your field of influence.
	3. Conclusion: End with a conclusion that reaffirms your thesis. Discuss what impact this research had on your sense of calling to change your world.
2. Paper Outline
	1. Begin with an introductory paragraph that has a succinct thesis statement.
	2. Address the topic of the paper with critical thought.
	3. End with a conclusion that reaffirms your thesis.
	4. Use a minimum of eleven scholarly research sources (two books and the remaining scholarly peer-reviewed journal articles).

**Gender Equity and Empowerment in Education from a Judeo-Christian Perspective**

We understand from a Judeo-Christian perspective that gender equity and empowerment in education is in alignment with Biblical principles of dignity and justice. The Bible also shows us that each person has intrinsic value because they are created in the image of God. Equity implies being fair and impartial. Empowerment is about granting power or authority to a person, enabling them to make their own decisions (Couva et al., 2024, p. 2-3).

Deborah was a Judge of Israel, showing that women can be in leadership. Pricilla was an educator as she and her husband taught Apollos the way of God. God calls men and women to impact their society through leadership, wisdom, and knowledge. Jesus and Paul both challenged the cultural norms of their day by affirming women in ministry.

To achieve an environment where everyone has an equal opportunity to be educated we must actively tear down all barriers standing in the way of gender equity and empowerment.

Gender equity in education can be seen as a biblical mandate, not simply a social issue. Equal access to education allows all people to be equipped to fulfill their God-given purpose.

**BIBLICAL WORLDVIEW PERSPECTIVE**

A biblical worldview provides a positive perspective on gender equity and empowerment in education, moving beyond simplistic interpretations that have historically perpetuated inequality. The Bible establishes the fundamental equality of males and females; both created in the image of God *(imago Dei)*, suggesting inherent dignity and worth that should translate into equitable educational opportunities.

Biblical anthropology recognizes the value and capacity of both men and women, requiring educational systems that empower both to fulfill their God-given potential (Longman and Dillard,2006). Similarly, we see the importance of understanding the cultural context of scripture, cautioning against interpretations that reinforce inequity instead of reflecting God's intentions for equality and justice (Bilezikian, 2006). Therefore, a biblical approach to education actively seeks to tear down barriers and promote equal access to education for all.

**HISTORY OF THE ISSUE**

The Bible makes it clear, that in the eyes of God, men and women should be treated equally, enjoying the same opportunities and rewards. It also shows that men and women, as well as boys and girls, are different while remaining equal in God’s eyes (Hermkens et al., 2022, p. 317).

Over the years, there has been progress toward gender equity in education. Girls and women now outperform boys and men in various areas of education. Despite the ground that has been gained in equity, inclusion, and empowerment, there still remains more that needs to be done. Women are still behind men in education, earning livelihoods, achieving legislative and political representation, and participating in key decision-making processes (Lwamba et al., 2022, p. 4). Women often face an unequal distribution of economic resources compared to men, a disparity that hinders their full participation in their country’s economic and social landscape (Wolff, 2024, p. 2).

Churches, in many cases, influence society toward gender inequality. Often, church doctrine and teachings dictate the status of women and consistently serve as a foundation for gender inequality. Modern evidence shows that religion affects gender roles within the home. Women in religious contexts have been conditioned to perceive themselves as subordinates to men, as it is seen as the divine will of the All-knowing God. This mental conditioning places women at a disadvantage both domestically and in the economic and professional spheres (Etim-James, 2024, p. 148).

Several denominations hold views on gender roles that restrict women's access to education. However, numerous Christian groups advocate for gender equity in education. They argue that men and women are created in God's image and should have equal opportunities to develop their talents and abilities. One scholar of ancient Rome noted that the conversion of the Roman world to Christianity brought significant changes in the status of women. Another has stated even more succinctly that the birth of Jesus marked a turning point in the history of women (Schmidt, 2004).

Numerous studies have demonstrated that women face a trade-off between competence and likability. Women in traditionally male domains face backlash at every turn: when being hired, compensated, and promoted. Psychologists suggest these negative reactions stem from a clash between our views of how women are or should be and the qualities we think are necessary to perform typically male jobs (Bonet, 2018, p. 22). Economic growth changes women's social and economic prospects and enhances gender equality (Iqbal et al., 2022, p. 7).

There are three themes illustrating views on gender insensitivity within male-dominated domains in the community and locality: (1) the deep-rooted trend of institutionalized male dominance in politics and religious leadership, (2) optimism for a turnaround narrative regarding gender equality in these areas, and (3) women influencing the ethical and moral framework for change. These themes highlight how women navigate their unique limitations, often referred to as the glass ceiling, and their attitudes toward fostering a supportive environment for other women (Akinwale et al., 2024, p. 202).

Some, like Christopher Rollston, are concerned about the treatment of women in the Old Testament. They do not accept the reality of sin and they view the biblical accounts of creation and the fall as myths. They place the blame directly on the institution of patriarchy and suggest a male bias on the part of biblical writers (Kostenberger, 2014, p. 71).

**EXEMPLARS OF RELIGION AND SOCIETY INTEGRATION**

Throughout history, individuals and movements inspired by Judeo-Christian values have advocated for gender equity and educational empowerment. Rabbi Akiva frequently defended the dignity of women and advocated for their equal treatment (Safrai, 1998).Jesus Christalso defied societal norms by treating women as equals, valuing their perspectives, and encouraging them to become disciples and leaders. Protestant reformers stressed literacy for everyone, leading to the creation of schools that welcomed both boys and girls, thereby promoting gender equity in basic education. Today, contemporary Christian organizations strive to empower girls and women through education, particularly in developing countries, while addressing gender-based violence and advocating for social justice. These examples illustrate how Judeo-Christian values have motivated individuals and communities to confront gender inequality in education, fostering empowerment and social change.

The development of gender equity and empowerment in education has been a long and complex process, with Christianity playing a significant role. Therefore, the paramount question is not whether Christianity influences gender equality, but to what extent (Kohm, 2008, p. 101-102). According to Oludele Ajani, religion remains one of the oldest yet most dynamic social institutions. He argues that the assumption that religion in modern societies would gradually diminish in importance or become less capable of influencing public life is now a matter of dispute. (Akanbi, 2017, p. 4).

**APPLICABLE PRINCIPLES**

Behavioral change is a long process that does not rely solely on the intention of people to change. Many have outlined various steps leading to behavioral change within a given society. Changing behavior is more intricate, requiring an understanding of the individual's emotions and their specific context (Bapolisis, 2024, p. 8).

People are not able to reach their God-given potential without training through some form of education. When women and girls are denied access to education, it hinders them from gaining the knowledge they need for success. Christians should be leading the fight to create equal opportunities in education. They should challenge every discriminatory practice and become advocates for just policies. As girls and women are allowed access to education, they become more productive in society and help break the cycle of poverty. Biblical principles lay a solid foundation for promoting gender equity and empowerment in education, ensuring that everyone can thrive and succeed.

Gender equity and empowerment in education should not be viewed only as social goals, but they should be seen as moral imperatives. Because men and women are created in the image of God they have dignity and should have equal access to educational opportunities. Principles of justice, love, and wisdom urge us to destroy discriminatory barriers and foster inclusive learning environments. Empowering girls and women through education is not only a matter of fairness but also a crucial element of fulfilling our responsibility. Hyde and Lindberg argue that girls and boys are quite similar and should not be limited in their curricula by gender. There still exists areas where gender differences exist. Many of these differences are related to experience and can be mitigated by instruction (Klein et al., 2010, p. 15). By implementing Biblical principles, a more just and equitable society can be established. In this type of social environment, all individuals can achieve their full potential and reflect the divine image within them. Gender equity in education can be seen as a biblical mandate, not simply a social issue. Equal access to education allows all people to be equipped to fulfill their God-given purpose. May the church forever strive for gender equity and empowerment in education.

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