

Mr. and Mrs.

By Rob White

For many years the church has presented a distorted picture of God to the world. Distorted because most of the expressions of the Body of Christ have been fashioned and delivered by masculinity. Fashioned through masculine lenses, masculine emotions (or the lack of them) and masculine processes of thought.

In short, we've presented a lopsided God.

It's a wonder that so many women have come to faith! I suppose it's because women have the ability to look deeper than the surface and are, largely, very forgiving. I'm not sure if men would have the foresight or patience to persevere if things were the other way around. Not only that, but also many women have been hurt and scarred by some crass masculine leadership – unthinking, unfeeling and boorish. The male ego can be a brutish thing – unbending and irrational when aroused.

It's time to redress the balance, but it's been time for ages so when is it going to change? How is it going to change? More disturbingly, will it change? It's so good to see more women exercising ministry, serving on leadership teams and taking their place on bigger platforms, such as Spring Harvest and even Mainstream Conferences, but there's still a long way to go. We have very few women Ministers and, if women sense a call to be such and follow that through with training, how many churches are there that would consider them?

If we're going to present a 'rounded' picture of God we must include women, married and single, on our leadership teams, in the pursuit of vision and strategy, and as Ministers. The intuition, nurturing nature and ability to empathise that women so often possess must be brought to the places of leadership and decision-making in order to put the vitally necessary colour into the monochrome picture shaped by men.

But that's only addressing part of the issue. The other part, and very important in my book, is the encouraging of married couples to minister together. It seems that Marion and I are a rare breed (no comments, please!) I can't think of many other husband and wife pairings who work alongside one another in a more public way. That's not to say that spouses do not support their partners who are in leadership or that doing so is somehow of no real significance. Not at all! But I wonder in how many marriages the question has been asked as to whether there may be a call to the spouse (usually a woman) to work with her husband in ways other than the role of supporting?

It seems strange, doesn't it, that in marriage we should be the closest of friends, share mutually as partners, rear a family together and yet, in the service of the One whom we both put first, largely we do different things? Before anyone leaps up protesting that husbands and wives may be very fulfilled in obeying the call of God on their lives to different things, I want to say that I'm fully aware of that! My main point is: in how many marriages is the question raised? Perhaps more to the point is: how many male leaders have considered encouraging their wives into ministry alongside them?

From a chauvinistic and arrogant attitude during the first few years of our marriage I had to learn how to open the doors of ministry opportunity for Marion and encourage her to go through them. I'm so glad I did, although I have had to admit that there have been times when that male ego I mentioned earlier rose up in rebellion at the challenge of what could have seemed like competition! Hopefully, when we speak together or pray for people there is at least something of value that those listening receive, but I know the women will possibly relate more to Marion's approach than mine and, sometimes, men will relate more to mine. Surely that more 'rounded' picture has got to be positive?

And, if we can do it, there must be many others that could – so, go on, ask the question!