



Fully Alive: A Biblical Vision of Gender That Frees Men and Women to Live Beyond Stereotypes

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What makes a man masculine? A woman feminine? Did God design the two genders so differently? If so, why? The answers to these questions will free women and men to gladly embrace all that it means to be fully alive as gendered bearers of God's image who can profoundly impact others for good by the way they relate.

Author and psychologist Dr. Larry Crabb presents a biblically grounded understanding of gender uniqueness. His illustration of a bridge of connection shows how the two genders can relationally come together in God-revealing harmony as they celebrate their God-designed uniqueness. Readers will discover that God created male and female to relate in gender-specific ways to make a difference in others by displaying God's relational character. Crabb clearly shows men and women what it means to live fully alive as feminine women and masculine men.

Fully Alive: A Biblical Vision of Gender That Frees Men and Women to Live Beyond Stereotypes Details

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From Reader Review Fully Alive: A Biblical Vision of Gender That Frees Men and Women to Live Beyond Stereotypes for online ebook

Joan says

Crabb's intention in writing this book was to answer the question, "What did God have in mind when He made us male and female?" There is lots of theory but I did not feel the book was very practical. Egalitarians will not like it. Crabb is wordy. He tells lots of stories, many about himself. He repeats himself. He uses psychological jargon. I don't think he really answered the question he posed. See my full review at <http://bit.ly/1cKHzb1>.

Nancy Rogers says

I recommend it. It's all about our journey with God as people, female and male. I think he says that he does not have all the answers. I learned a lot and the definition of key words made me appreciate God's genius. I felt frustrated not knowing how some of this should be fleshed out. I guess that is where the Holy Spirit comes in. Because I still have questions I gave it a 4. It was hard to read in places because of my own resistance.

Daniel says

When a clinical psychologist takes on an exegetical role as an author, it always puts me on edge. While Crabb does make some great points, it is how he proves his points exegetically that left me uneasy. This is not to say that Crabb is wrong in what he proves, but rather in how he attempts to prove it (especially linguistically). A lack of footnotes or cited scholars on the issues of linguistic and Biblical exegesis gave the appearance of trying to hide something.

Melissa says

I'm having a really tough time writing exactly what I thought about this book. Mostly because, while I agree with the basic message Crabb was *intending* to convey, I disagree with his execution. I guess I should also mention that there might be spoilers but with a book like this, is that possible?

Length- This book is 219 pages with 27 chapters. While 219 pages is typically not a very large book, it sure felt long. Crabb is pretty redundant. There are several chapters in a row that are short and repeat the previous chapter's contents almost exactly. There was a lot of talk with the same two messages repeating over and over and over. I understand he wants to emphasize his message but, in my opinion, he fails to elaborate very articulately what to do about it.

Content- This is where rubber hits the road so to speak and where I failed to agree with Crabb's execution. On pages 218 and 219, he summarizes his basic messages in neat little boxes. Which makes me wonder why I had to read 217 pages for something that could fit inside a little box to include two paragraphs. Basically,

Crabb states that everyone is either male or female. But we are not all feminine women or masculine men.

The Feminine Woman- A unfeminine woman lives closed off from others, controlling others, guarding herself, living defensively or protectively of herself. Her motivational fear is invisibility. Crabb says "She relates with one embraced purpose in mind: to encourage others to be consumed and transformed by the beauty of the God who sees, invites, nourishes, and enjoys His people." There are several finer points Crabb details in his book about women that I found odd and of which I was unable to articulate my exact feelings. Suffice to say, if I pointed them all out, this review would be too long. So I will stick with the main points. According to Crabb (pg 42) a woman will not be a feminine woman unless "she relates in a way that invites others to see something about God that is irresistibly attractive, something about the relational nature of God that she was created to enjoy and reveal." Crabb never moves beyond this thought. He talks about how women live in the fear of invisibility (which I do not agree with) and need to live in an inviting and open way; never articulating what he means by that exactly.

The Masculine Man- A masculine man hears the struggles of others, moves towards others, and sacrifices himself to serve others. To take directly from Crabb: "He relates with one embraced purpose in mind: to encourage others to trust and to rest in the beauty of the God who is always moving toward others in in love". Crabb also says on pg 108 " In their aloneness, men fear weightlessness. Do I what it takes to move into community, into soul-to-soul connection? To risk that my moving will have no visible impact? To move toward other who might not value my movement?" Not sure if this resonates with the guys or not. I'm leaving it at that since I can't speak for the dudes.

What does this mean to me? I certainly believe, as a Christian, that God created us to live in community with each other. We need to live beyond selfishness/ourselves and consider others as more important than ourselves. Which I think Crabb was trying to point out but failed to write very well. But my biggest problem is that he does not point us to the Bible as our source for living a Christ-driven life. As a woman, myself, I believe that femininity is not exclusive to living in "an inviting way". As a woman, I believe I am inherently feminine because God created me to be a woman. I am feminine, not just in spirit, but also in body. The physical description of a woman is feminine, something which Crabb openly denies as true. Crabb is attempting to make masculinity/femininity and gender mutually exclusive. Furthermore, I think Crabb is wrong about female and male fears. I do not live in fear of being invisible. I believe everyone has fears of all different types that can motivate certain behavior. It is not just one blanket fear for women and another for men. At the end of his book, Crabb does not tell the reader to study the Bible and work towards a "circumcised heart". Philippians talks about this very subject especially in 2:3-4: "Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others." And 2:13 "for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure". No matter how we screw things up, and we will, God is always working in us.

The better question, in my mind, would be to ask "How can I live in a way that shares the gospel?" or "How can my reaction to this situation share the gospel?" I guess when it comes down to it, for me anyway, I don't struggle with not feeling feminine. I feel like a feminine woman, made in God's image, who just wants to live a more God-centered life. Thus, I don't feel this book resonated with me in any meaningful way. Maybe it would to someone else. I finish my review with these exhortations from the apostle Paul: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Galatians 3:28 And also Colossians 3:11 "Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all." I do not believe that there is particular set of characteristics that define women or men who reside in Christ. The fruit of the spirit will be evident in those who are walking in the Lord. Biblically, we all live under the same laws, which are applied **equally** to everyone. God's law, gospel, love and grace is not gender specific.

Brad says

Hm...hard to know what to say about this book. It introduces a very thought-provoking, valuable, and wonderful concept that I haven't seen raised elsewhere--the idea that femininity is about the invitational beauty of God and that masculinity is about the incarnational beauty of God.

Other than that, though, I hate to say that the book is largely a mess. Overall it's repetitive and poorly organized, and there are a few passages that kind of made me grimace and led to me just skimming the last third or so of the book: at one point he suggests that a truly feminine woman is not preoccupied with what her rights are, but rather sort of gratefully embrace her identity as a woman meant to reveal God's glory. I understand the notion of needing to have a heart that is open and humble before God, but there is another level where people, especially women who have been disadvantaged, are right to have a tough exterior and fight for justice. This is especially true of women in many places outside the United States. It seems he didn't think critically to consider what it may be like beyond his advantaged circumstances in that passage.

Another section seemed to be poorly crafted in such a way that it could sort of be read as blaming or being overly harsh on a woman who's suffered abuse from her husband. In other places, it's very evident that Crabb has great sympathy toward women who've suffered abuse and doesn't take it lightly...but it seems he was a bit careless with the way he crafted that passage.

In another passage, he throws out that he once told a Sunday school class he taught that an honest look at the human condition will require one to "choose one of only three options: commit suicide, go mad, or trust God." While I get that his point is that the consideration of life without God leads to a sense of nihilism, I found it an irresponsible statement to throw out there with no sort of further explanation or qualification imploring that no one ever genuinely consider suicide as a viable option, regardless of whether they believe or trust in God, and that if they feel serious about taking their own life that they should seek help.

Overall, I think Crabb means well, but he seems to have been a bit careless thinking some things through and crafting certain passages.

Coyle says

Rather than review this book myself, I'll just direct you to my wife's thoughts on it:

"For Crabb, the heart of biblical manhood or womanhood is rooted in the different genders' ways of relating. Women, according to Crabb, should relate in an open and inviting way, welcoming and nurturing others and being willing to both give and receive. Wives should submit to their husbands (though Crabb is a bit confusing on this point, as all of his examples involve disobedience-as-submission—a situation that can certainly arise, but which paints a rather misleading picture of the normal daily pattern of submission). Men, on the other hand, should remember God's truth and move towards others in love. Nothing too objectionable there, right?

The trouble is the foundation of Crabb's framework. Although the book purports to be based on a biblical understanding of femininity and masculinity, the primary basis for Crabb's ideas seems to be ... the sex act. Or at least the human reproductive system. Like John Eldredge before him, Crabb sees in sexual intercourse

a physical picture of biblical gender roles. Actually, no. That's not accurate. That might be ok. Crabb seems to see gender roles as a picture of sex. In other words, rather than starting with a study of Scripture as a whole in an attempt to discern its teaching on gender, he seems to start with sex and then cherry-pick the bible verses that best support his claims."

Read the rest here: <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/schaeffe...>

Alexis Neal says

An excerpt of a review recently posted on Schaeffer's Ghost:

The trouble is the *foundation* of Crabb's framework. Although the book purports to be based on a *biblical* understanding of femininity and masculinity, the primary basis for Crabb's ideas seems to be ... the sex act. Or at least the human reproductive system. Like John Eldredge before him, Crabb sees in sexual intercourse a physical picture of biblical gender roles. Actually, no. That's not accurate. That might be ok. Crabb seems to see gender roles as a picture of sex. In other words, rather than starting with a study of Scripture as a whole in an attempt to discern its teaching on gender, he seems to start with sex and then cherry-pick the bible verses that best support his claims.

The entirety of his argument regarding 'biblical' femininity seems to rest on the fact that the Hebrew word for 'female' is etymologically connected to the word for 'perforated or punctured'—that is, something with holes in it. Even assuming that he's done his homework here, and that the etymological connection is a reference to the female sex organ—that somewhere back along the line, the Hebrew term for female was essentially 'something you nail'—those etymological connections are not an adequate basis for an entire philosophy of gender.

Full review available [here](#).

Jason Kanz says

Last week, I attended the 52nd School for Spiritual Direction led by Larry Crabb, the author of *Fully Alive: A Biblical Vision of Gender That Frees Men and Women to Live Beyond Stereotypes* (2013) and we were all given a copy of this book. Crabb's understanding of gender is refreshing. Examining the Hebrew and Greek words for men and women, he proposes an understanding of what makes men masculine and women feminine. He argues that to live most consistently with our gender, men must seek to "remember and move" and women were created to "invite and nourish." Through practical examples, he shows how a biblical understanding can work well and not so well. This was a good book, but I suspect things he says will cause people to rock back on their heels a bit, whether liberal or conservative. It will give everyone something to think about.

Thadeus says

This was a challenging book. I really enjoyed the beginning with diving into Genesis and the meaning of words used in speaking of creation. Then it got very difficult as the author leads you through an exploration of what it means to relate as a masculine man or a feminine woman. It was challenging to find a place upon first reading because it seemed I was always looking for specifics and not finding them. As it came to the end of the book and a focus on brokenness and confession, this really spoke to me, and I thought was a very strong point of the book.

Another positive of the book is that it gives a good grounding for reading Schema of a Soul by Kimberlye Berg, which is very powerful.

Overall, I felt this is a good book for introducing relational concepts. It was somewhat challenging reading though.

Recommended.

Stephen Buerger says

I think I mostly liked what it said, but it he took so long to say it (because he summarized over and over again), I almost didn't finish it.

Exodus Books says

Too often discussions on gender devolve into questions of hierarchy and power. Are men more important than women? Are women exactly equal to men? Who is in control? Who has more authority? Fully Alive sidesteps that issue, looking for a Biblical center that bypasses the complementarian vs. egalitarian debate. Sadly, it doesn't quite make it.

Author and well-respected Christian psychologist Larry Crabb heads back to scripture, attempting to find out "what God had in mind when he made a woman feminine and when he made a man masculine." Gender, he says, is a way that humans, made in God's image, "reveal something wonderful about God," specifically through the way men and women relate. A man who is relating the way a man should is a "masculine man;" it has nothing to do with stereotypes. So far so good.

But how should a man or woman relate to others? The answer, Crabb says, can be found by examining... the meaning of the two Hebrew words for male and female. Wait, what?

From the book:

With these two Hebrew words, zakar and neqebah, the idea of gender is introduced as the relational expression of a person's sex.

From a Christianity Today article:

Neqebah (female) means one who is open to receive, has an invitational style of relating. And zakar (male) means one who remembers something important and then does it.

According to Crabb, women should relate to people by being "open" and "inviting." Men should relate to people by "moving" into people's lives. Women want others to come and be nurtured. Men want to make a difference. Women invite movement; men move. Of course, there's nothing inherently wrong with this theory, setting aside his shaky exegesis. Generic claims like "all women fear invisibility" and "all men fear insignificance" are really two ways of expressing the human need to be wanted, and he acknowledges that.

The problem is with his conclusion, or more specifically the language surrounding his conclusion. Men and women, he claims, who are not living as fully feminine or masculine are in some form of "relational sin." When a woman is "closed off" she is in relational sin. When a man is "stopped" he is in relational sin.

In general terms, yes, people who are closed off from others and who are complacent about approaching others are probably in some form of sin. But the way Larry Crabb frames his argument, one gets the impression that this form of sin is wrong simply because one isn't living up to his standards of gender. He repeatedly claims that one can be an unmasculine or unfeminine Christian and probably still be saved. But he believes that God is more pleased with Christians who are truly masculine or truly feminine.

When Crabb talks about the gospel he is right on track, and quite inspiring. When he starts using verses that are about the gospel as proof that one must live as a "moving" man or an "open" woman he begins to fall off the track and head into the ditch of legalism. The truth is we are already fully alive in Jesus Christ, and the gospel is transforming us into better men and women as a result of our sanctification, our moving into conformity with Christ. Being truly "masculine" or "feminine" is not the end goal.

Read more of this review (and more like it) on our website.

Rosanne says

In over 30 years as a Christian, every discussion I'd heard about Biblical masculinity and femininity, whether complementarian or egalitarian, liberating or legalistic, essentially boiled down to the two elements of roles and power, and the role of women was always defined in relation to (or resistance/reaction to) men. How terrifyingly life-giving it was at SSD when Larry delved beneath roles and control to address what God's Word reveals about the uniqueness of our design as men and women who are not defined by each other but by our bearing of God's image, to reveal His nature! I love the fact that this book does not simply camp on the marriage relationship but gives a framework for all relationships.

Having just completed my first read of FULLY ALIVE, I plan to go back through it immediately, highlighter, journal and pen in hand. As always, Larry's perspective plunges deep beneath the surface to look at foundational truth. The many layers of his message stir me to think in specifics..."What would revealing Christ look like in my relationship w/ _____? Where does my self-protection feel justified? How am I refusing to reveal the glory of God by pursuing lesser things in my relationships?"

It's a convicting book, painful to read at times because it so clearly (though gently) exposes how deeply we fail to love well. Ultimately, however, FULLY ALIVE stirs a yearning to live transcendentally. We were created to display God's glory and share His joy; anything less than uniting with Him to live this way is

death. If you long to rest, to see and reveal the beauty of Jesus, to change deeply and live purposefully in your relationships, I invite you to experience this book as a means of grace.

Merv Budd says

Larry Crabb wades into the murky waters of Gender identity to provide help in advancing a much needed Biblical imagination of what it means to be a man or women. No doubt this book will be controversial, these days books around sexual identity have a target on them. Rather than look at gender roles Dr. Crabb considers the distinct relational strengths of each gender. And he challenges the reader to flee from pursuing the “blessed life”, as well as the “healed life”, but instead he encourages them to strive to embrace the hardships so that true life can emerge. He is very honest often vulnerable which makes the book easier to relate to.

I did find that he leans quite heavily upon the semantic meaning of Hebrew words to develop his primary thesis and from my perspective this makes it a bit weak, however not necessarily false. At times I found myself frustrated trying to put flesh to his concepts but intrigued enough to keep reading and wrestling to understand.

I think that many, many people will find this book helpful in becoming more of who God has designed them to be.

This book has been provided courtesy of Graf-Martin Communications and BakerBooks in exchange for an honest review.

Ryan Jankowski says

This was a great work on the significance of gender. Persuasive. Encouraging.

I only wish Crabb would stop confusing perichoresis with some sort of trinitarian dance that we will one day participate.

Leea Dipentino says

Okay, so I marked this as read; which isn't entirely accurate. I read the first four chapters and decided it wasn't worth my time. I spent two hours reading those four chapters! Not because I'm a slow reader, but because I would read and re-read. I was reading the words, but not getting the content. While this subject might be a good one, the author is definitely a doctor and not a writer! You try reading through a medical chart and keeping your interest. That's what it felt like to read this book. So, while I usually finish a book I start (even if it's not a good one), I could not bring myself to continue any further with this dreary read. Good luck if you do!
