

# What's Wrong with Doug Wilson? (3<sup>rd</sup> edition)

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## Why write this critique?

Believe me, I wish I didn't have to, but almost every day I hear Doug Wilson's name mentioned in conversation. Both in the UK and USA I have friends and colleagues who regularly listen to Doug, and they ask me, 'What do you think is bad about Doug Wilson?' As I would recount the reasons why I do not think he is a good source to learn from, I felt like I sounded like a conspiracy theorist, because some of the reasons sound unbelievable. So, I felt I should put something down on paper, with references to things Doug has said, so that people can see these things for themselves.

I know that in these situations, some people say, 'Shouldn't you go privately to Doug to share these concerns as in Matthew 18?' However, the process in Matthew 18:15-19 is for when a brother or sister sins against me. As far as I know Doug has not sinned against me, he doesn't even know me. Secondly, the things mentioned in this critique have been done in public, and mostly taught publicly to people via books and/or the internet. Therefore, although this is not written as a rebuke to Doug, a public rebuke would be appropriate, just as Paul publicly rebuked Peter (Gal 2:14), and later published this in a letter to the church, so that other people would be warned of Peter's error (Gal 2:11-21).

I should also point out that the following critique is by no means exhaustive. I have only covered the things that I am most familiar with, or that I have time to write about. Much more could be put into this critique, but instead I have focused on the things that I first became aware of that gave me cause for concern.

## Overview of Doug Wilson's Ministry

The following links give a general overview of some of the problems with Doug's ministry.

### Aquila Report Question for Doug Wilson Fans

<https://theaquilareport.com/a-question-for-doug-wilson-fans/>

The above article has questions for Doug's fans, about some of the problematic aspects of Doug's ministry. It is written from a Reformed and Presbyterian perspective.

### Vice article on Doug Wilson's ministry and the harm done to women

<https://www.vice.com/en/article/m7ezwx/inside-the-church-that-preaches-wives-need-to-be-led-with-a-firm-hand>

This article is a secular piece, and whilst I know many will discount it for that, it is worth remembering the doctrine of 'Common grace' which means that God will at times use secular sources to speak prophetically to the Church, and even to bless the church. It is also helpful to see how the world perceives Doug, when the Scriptures teach that a pastor must be above reproach and have a good reputation with outsiders (1Tim 3:1-7). Of course, I recognise that Vice does in general have its own biases, which we should always be aware of whenever we read news and analysis articles.<sup>1</sup>

It is also very disturbing to hear reports of marital rape in the article. Later in this critique, we will look at some of the teachings that I believe can encourage marital rape.

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<sup>1</sup> For anyone interested, the AdFontes Media Bias Chart, place 'Vice' in the category of 'Mostly Analysis OR Mix of Fact Reporting and Analysis' as well as 'Skews Left' as opposed to either 'Hyper-Partisan Left' or 'Middle.' I appreciate that some might say that AdFontes has a bias themselves. However, their chart might still be a useful starting place for doing your own investigation of media bias. You can view their Media Bias Chart here <https://adfontesmedia.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Media-Bias-Chart-9.0-Jan-2022-Unlicensed-Social-Media-Low-scaled.jpg>

## Doug's view of Sex

### Describing sex as men conquering and colonising

Doug Wrote,

'When we quarrel with the way the world is, we find that the world has ways of getting back at us. In other words, however we try, the sexual act cannot be made into an egalitarian pleasuring party. A man penetrates, conquers, colonizes, plants. A woman receives, surrenders, accepts. This is of course offensive to all egalitarians, and so our culture has rebelled against the concept of authority and submission in marriage. This means that we have sought to suppress the concepts of authority and submission as they relate to the marriage bed.'

Wilson, Douglas. Fidelity . Canon Press. Kindle Edition., (1976).

You can read Doug's words in context [here](#):

This is a troubling description of sex. It starts off rejecting the idea that the act of sex is two equals mutually giving pleasure to the other (in total contrast to the Song of Songs). It then describes sex as a military takeover of a man conquering a woman who surrenders. This has troubling connotations for the meaning of consent and could easily give some men the impression that if their wife does not feel up to sex one night, the man can conquer her, and she will eventually surrender. It portrays sex sound violent (and if you thought that the Tower references in Song of Songs support Doug's view, then please read Amie Byrd's 'Sexual Reformation.'). Lastly it brings in the idea that a husband has a God given authority over his wife in a sex act. This is completely different to 1 Corinthians 7:4 (NIV) 'The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife.'

You can read analysis from Andrew Wilson here

<https://thinktheology.co.uk/blog/article/on-communicating-truth>

And analysis from Dave Williams here

<https://faithroot.com/2021/04/24/does-doug-wilson-endorse-marital-rape/>

And here is an analysis from Rachel Held Evans

<https://rachelheldevans.com/blog/gospel-coalition-douglas-wilson-sex>

I recognise that Doug Wilson fans probably will not want to read Rachel, but again, the Reformed doctrine of Common grace, means that we should listen to our critics, knowing that God might be speaking through them.

Lastly, I would recommend reading Sheila Gregoire's 'The Great Sex Rescue' book to better understand harmful teachings about sex that have been taught in the Church.

He should be aggressive enough, and well-endowed enough, to satisfy you sexually.

Doug wrote about lists women should have for their future husband, and under the category of 'Special Category/Prayer Request/Luck of the Draw,' he wrote,

'He should be aggressive enough, and well-endowed enough, to satisfy you sexually.'  
<https://dougwils.com/books-and-culture/s7-engaging-the-culture/laws-of-attraction.html>

Much could be said here, but I'm primarily concerned with this language that equates a man's aggression with sexual satisfaction. When coupled with the earlier quote of a man who during sex 'conquers, colonizes,' Doug promotes the idea that aggressive-conquering-sex is *the* 'biblical' way to satisfy a woman. At best, this portrays a myopic view of how women are satisfied, and at worst, this can very easily legitimise abuse and marital rape. Instead, we should consider the biblical data (Song of Songs, 1 Cor 7:4 etc.), as well as the pastoral concern of asking our spouses what they want. For example, an abuse survivor might well find it traumatising for their husband to act aggressively during sex.

### **Women tacitly accepting the propriety of rape**

Doug wrote,

'Say a woman — for some egalitarian and very foolish reason, declines to have her dinner date walk her back to her car in some urban center after dark. Let us say she is raped and murdered. According to what RHE says, my response is going to be some variant of "served her right." Now you would have to be a fool not to see the connection between her refusal of an escort and what happened to her, but you would also have to be pretty vile to say that walking to your car deserves the penalty of rape and murder. You would also have to be pretty high up among Obama's advisers to falsely accuse someone of being that vile.

One consequence of rejecting the protection of good men is that you are opening yourself up to the predations of bad men. I fully acknowledge that this is not what such women *think* they are doing. They think they are rejecting the patriarchy, or some other icky thing, but when they have walked away from the protections of fathers and brothers, what it amounts to is a tacit (implicit, in principle, not overt) acceptance of the propriety of rape.' <https://dougwils.com/books-and-culture/s7-engaging-the-culture/110222.html>

On the one hand, read in context, it appears that Doug does not think such a woman deserves to be raped. And yet he says that a woman not accepting an offer to be walked to her car is implicitly accepting the moral correctness of rape. Firstly, this is a logical fallacy. Secondly, it assumes there is a 'propriety' a moral correctness of the rape of a woman walking to her car. Thirdly, it is victim blaming, the rape is framed as occurring because of the woman declining an escort to her car, rather than the fact that a rapist set out to victimise a woman. Fourthly, it ignores the fact that sometimes the rapist is the person walking someone to their car. Fifthly, it ignores the fact that a lot of rape occurs within

marriages where a woman has already 'accepted' the 'protection' of her husband. Sixthly, rape sadly occurs in too many other scenarios, that framing rape this way is reductionist.

It is really important that we understand that rape occurs because of people committing evil against another, not because another declined an escort to their car. We need to put blame where blame lies, on the rapist, not the victim. We need to train boys, and disciple men better, so that they recognise the power they have, and use it to serve and protect, rather than sexually victimise women, and verbally blame women for rape.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> I say 'serve and protect' as a translation of Hebrew words *avad* and *shamar* in Gen 2:15, terms that were then used of Priests, and concepts that are found throughout Scripture of how image bearers should use their power.

## Inappropriate objectifying language about women's breasts and looks.

Doug comes across as obsessed with women's breasts, and uses inappropriate language to describe them. His language is derogatory, as well as objectifying. I see three obvious problems with this.

Firstly, his language is lewd, as in vulgar and lecherous, and arrogant. Jesus said,

<sup>21</sup> For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, <sup>22</sup> adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. <sup>23</sup> All these evils come from inside and defile a person." Mark 7:21–23 (NIV)

Secondly, each time he speaks this way about one of God's image bearers I believe he is going against the 9<sup>th</sup> commandment, as Bavinck explains,

*'The Ninth Commandment concerns our duties toward our neighbor's reputation... Scripture forbids even every idle word. This commandment also forbids all insulting, name-calling, vilifying, malicious gossip, and mocking those with disabilities. We are not to delight in such things but rebuke them. Positively, we are commanded to show concern for our neighbors' honor and reputation as precious and, in a nutshell, to love the truth, form true representations of things, and convey the truth we obtained by communicating in our language with objective purity.'*<sup>3</sup>

Thirdly, Scripture also tells us to 'Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.' Colossians 4:6 (NIV)

I would ask you to consider the following quotes from Doug and ask if they are 'full of grace' and showing 'concern for our neighbor's honor' or lewd, 'insulting, name-calling, vilifying'.

### 'boobs of a wet nurse'

Doug wrote,

'Next time you are in a grocery store check out line check out (no, I don't mean check *out*) the partially dressed female on the cover of the nearest women's magazine, the kind my kids call a day-old doughnut. Right, the one with the fake bake tan, the abs of a sixteen-year-old boy, the boobs of a wet nurse, and the knock-your-eye out bottle blondisity.'

<https://dougwils.com/books-and-culture/s7-engaging-the-culture/bottle-blondisity.html>

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<sup>3</sup> Herman Bavinck, [Reformed Ethics: The Duties of the Christian Life](#), ed. John Bolt et al., vol. 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic: A Division of Baker Publishing Group, 2021), 420.

### 'small-breasted biddies'

Doug wrote, 'That sets the tone, and the pestering is then made complete by small-breasted biddies who want to make sure nobody is using too much hot water in the shower, and that we are all getting plenty of fiber.'

<https://dougwils.com/books-and-culture/s7-engaging-the-culture/smash-the-complementarity.html>

### 'jiggling your boobs'

Doug wrote,

'So there was this Muslim cleric who put his foot in it, clean up to the knee, by saying that women dressing immodestly is the cause of earthquakes. There was naturally a response in this country that called for women to show some principled cleavage in order to test that holy man's thesis. On Monday, many thousands of them did so, in what passes for political discourse these days. It would be fair to say that there were many incidents of déclassé décolletage — unattractive feminist scientists flaunting what they thought was sexuality, attractive bimbo queens taking the opportunity, natch, aging beauties reliving the glory days, and all of them over the top, so to speak...

My point is that jiggling your boobs for a YouTube clip is a response to an ignorant Muslim that works equally well as a response to the apostle Peter, which is to say, not at all.'

<https://dougwils.com/books-and-culture/s7-engaging-the-culture/boobquake-and-the-meaning-of-history.html>

### Some chick... bouncing away like there's no tomorrow...big boobs etc.

Doug wrote,

'Suppose a man and his wife are out walking at the mall, and some chick is walking toward them, bouncing away like there's no tomorrow...Minimize the seriousness of it so that you can walk away from a couple of big boobs without feeling like you have just fought a cosmic battle with principalities and powers in the heavenly places, for crying out loud. Or, if you like, in another strategy of seeing things rightly, you could nickname these breasts of other woman as the "principalities and powers."

Whatever you do, take this part of life in stride like a grown-up. Stop reacting like a horny and conflicted twelve-year-old boy.'

<https://dougwils.com/books-and-culture/s7-engaging-the-culture/dealing-with-nuisance-lust-2.html>

### Using the C word:

Doug wrote,

"So let me tell you what this symbolism really means. This is what *they* are saying. They are shamelessly declaring to the world that they are just a couple of cunts."

<https://dougwils.com/books-and-culture/s7-engaging-the-culture/that-lutheran-jezebel-lady.html>

When I read this, I was utterly stunned that people still followed Doug. This use of language is 'a kind that even pagans do not tolerate' (1 Cor 5:1). To make matters worse, if you read the context you will see Doug defending his language as righteous by likening himself to

Phinehas killing people with a spear. But we should not discount all that Scripture says about how we should and shouldn't use our voice by invoking Phinehas.

### Book about a Sex Robot

Doug wrote a book about a sex robot. Here is an excerpt:

'Ace stood there for just a moment, and then he heard a voice, wafting up from below. "Uhhh. Do it again. Uhhh. Harder, harder."

As Ace walked over to the switch that would activate the compactor, he was nodding his head slowly, and very deliberately. Her voice was fading, but against the dead quiet of the

late evening recycling plant, he could still hear it plainly. "Ride me, ride me," the plaintive voice was saying. "Okay," Ace said, "ride, Sally, ride," and he flipped the switch.'

<https://canonpress.com/products/ride-sally-ride-a-novel/>

The topic of and the language used in this book, make me ask the question, 'Why does Doug talk about sex so much, and why is he so graphic?' And my second question is, 'Why are men drawn to this?' The Bible says,

<sup>3</sup> But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. <sup>4</sup> Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. <sup>5</sup> For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. <sup>6</sup> Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient. <sup>7</sup> Therefore do not be partners with them.' Ephesians 5:3–7 (NIV)

## Doug's views on Marriage

There is so much to say on this area, but I have chosen to focus on that which most Reformed Christians would see as problematic. I recognise that Egalitarians will not be Doug Wilson fans, so there is no point in covering points that they find problematic.

### The first time the dishes are not done

Doug wrote,

'The first time the dishes are not done, he must sit down with his wife immediately, and gently remind her that this is something which has to be done. At no time may he lose his temper, badger her, call her names, etc. He must constantly remember and confess that she is not the problem, he is. By bringing this gently to her attention, he is not to be primarily pointing to her need to repent; rather, he is exhibiting the fruit of his repentance. He does this, without rancour and without an accusative spirit, until she complies or rebels. If she complies, he must move up one step, now requiring that another of her duties be done. If she rebels, he must call the elders of the church and ask them for a pastoral visit. When the government of the home has failed to such an extent, and a godly and consistent attempt by the husband to restore the situation has broken down, then the involvement of the elders is fully appropriate.' Doug Wilson, *Federal Husband*, Canon Press, 2011, chapter 'Not Where They Should Be.'

Firstly, nowhere do the Scriptures command that wives should wash dishes. There is Christian liberty for husbands and wives to work out who does what chores. So this smacks of legalism and following traditions of man (Mark 7:1-13). Secondly, to bring the church elders round for breaking a tradition of man, is heavy shepherding.

### Wives need to be led with a firm hand

Doug wrote,

'Second, wives need to be led with a firm hand. A wife will often test her husband in some area, and be deeply disappointed (and frustrated) if she wins. It is crucial that a husband give to his wife what the Bible says she needs, rather than what she says she needs. So a godly husband is a godly lord.'  
Wilson, Douglas (2009-04-01). *Reforming Marriage* (p. 80). Canon Press. Kindle Edition.

Where does the Bible teach that men lead wives with a 'firm hand'? This is not how Jesus portrays leadership, instead he says,

<sup>25</sup> "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>26</sup> Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>27</sup> and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—<sup>28</sup> just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Matthew 20:25–28 (NIV)

Jesus's words show that leadership is more about serving than having a 'firm hand.'

Paul echo's this teaching when he says,

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word... <sup>28</sup> In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church—" 'Ephesians 5:25–29 (NIV)

Husbands are to give themselves up for their wives, making sacrifices for their wives, loving their wives as much as they love themselves, which in v.29 is described as feeding and caring.

And in Colossians 3:19, Paul said,

'Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.'

It is my worry that in exhorting men to lead with a 'firm hand' it will encourage a harshness that is the very opposite to what Scripture teaches.

Again, notice how Scripture does not tell men to have a firm hand, but instead encourages consideration to wives,

<sup>7</sup> Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.' 1 Peter 3:7 (NIV)

You might think you are not attracted to a guy because you are nervous about where he might lead you. Not so good.

In an article advising women to make a check list of qualities to look for in a husband, under the 'Need to have' category Doug writes,

'So he must be attractive to you, but you must also have a good understanding of the laws of attraction. If you are not attracted to a guy because he is a milksop, you shouldn't feel bad about that. You are pleasing God through not being attracted. You are doing your duty. But if there is a guy you actually do respect, but you are not crushing on him, or your heart is not doing a gymnastic floor exercise, and as a result you worry that you are not "attracted," this means you that probably are misinterpreting the laws of attraction at the deeper level. You are not attracted to a guy you know you could lead around. Good for you. But you might think you are not attracted to a guy because you are nervous about where he might lead you. Not so good.'

<https://dougwils.com/books-and-culture/s7-engaging-the-culture/laws-of-attraction.html>

Firstly, Here Doug appears to be saying that it is bad on the woman's part, if she is nervous about where a man might lead her. Shouldn't we instead ask questions of the man's

behaviour? What is it about his character that makes a woman nervous about where he might lead her?

Secondly, telling a woman who is not attracted to a man that she is probably misinterpreting the laws of attraction, sounds ridiculous—is she attracted to him or not? If she is not, fair enough, let's not tell her that she is wrong. This smacks of telling women how they should think and feel, rather than trusting that as image bearers they can make wise decisions with the help of the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit, and godly counsel.

Thirdly, the advice in the above article does not protect women from marrying abusive men, but rather makes it more likely. The advice waves aside some red flags, whilst encouraging the pursuit of other red flags (such as aggression). This is strange given Wilson's well known insistence that the type of patriarchy he advocates for, protects women from abuse.

## Handling of Child Abuse in his church

### Overview

There are two well-known stories of sexual abuse in Doug's church. Abuse can occur in any church, but in these cases, how Wilson responded afterwards is very problematic.

You can read David William's analysis of the Wilson's philosophy behind the Sitler and Green cases here <https://faithroot.com/2021/04/26/doug-wilson-and-child-safeguarding/>

### Marrying convicted Paedophile Stephen Sitler to a woman

It is troubling that Doug married a convicted paedophile Stephen Sitler to a woman in his church. There is a long standing myth that marriage will fix a paedophile, but this is simply not true. Sadly, as soon as a child was born, that child was in danger. In the links below, you can read details of this case, as well as court records.

Sitler update by 'The Truth about Moscow'

<https://moscowid.net/2017/08/12/steven-sitler-update-the-house-that-wilson-built/>

Sitler Court records

<http://sitler.moscowid.net/category/court-records/>

### Handling of Sexual Abuse by Jamin Wright in his Church

Thirteen-year-old Natalie Rose Greenfield was abused by 23-year-old Jamin Wright. It was heart-breaking to read the email exchange between Doug Wilson and Natalie, but I believe Natalie has removed this from her website, so out of respect for her I have not posted it. However Natalie has made public a timeline of the events which is linked to below.

The victim's (Natalie Rose Greenfield) timeline of events

<https://spiritualsoundingboard.com/2015/09/27/sex-abuse-victim-natalie-rose-greenfield-the-timeline-doug-wilsons-attempt-to-shift-focus-off-the-real-story/>

Court records of Jamin Wright

<http://wight.moscowid.net>

## Plagiarism

Doug plagiarised other authors in his book 'Southern Slavery As It Was.' Not only is this unethical in the secular world, but it is dishonest, and again breaks the ninth commandment, and calls into question the integrity of Doug's ministry. If Doug is dishonest in his writing, what else is he dishonest about?

Examples of plagiarism of 'Time on the Cross' in 'Southern Slavery As It Was'  
<http://www.tomandrodna.com/notonthepalouse/Plagiarism.htm>

## Federal Vision

Doug is known for his federal vision views that include believing in Baptismal Regeneration, and rejecting Justification by Faith. However, more recently, he claims to have distanced himself from Federal Vision. Although I would not usually quote Scott Clark, I have linked him below because he critique's Doug's claims.

### Scott Clark on Douglas' Federal Vision

<https://heidelblog.net/2019/07/has-doug-wilson-really-changed-his-mind-about-the-federal-vision/>

At the bottom of Scott's article there is a link to further information on Doug's Federal Vision views.

## Views on Slavery

Doug paints American Christian slave owners as benevolent masters. If this seems convincing to you, then I would ask you to read 'The Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass.' Frederick Douglass was a Christian slave who critiqued the slave holder religion.

Doug also emphasizes that Africans were enslaving other Africans, and claims that being brought to America resulted in better conditions for slaves. Again, if this sounds convincing, then I would ask you to read, 'The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano,' where he describes what life as a slave in Africa was like compared to how he was treated by Europeans.

Libby Anne's Article on Wilson's 'Slavery As It Was'

<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/lovejoyfeminism/2015/07/doug-wilson-slavery-as-it-was.html>

Libby's article outlines and critiques Doug's position on slavery.

## Conclusion

My greatest concern is Doug's attitude towards women, and how this might be influencing other men. The obsession with women's breasts, the lewd language used, and the victim blaming for rape, is antithetical to how we should be disciplining men. The teaching on marriage is legalistic, and the teaching on sex is abusive. The two sex abuse scandals in his church demonstrate that his church is not a safe space.

Doug's plagiarism also demonstrates that he is not an honest man, which calls into question the integrity of his whole ministry.

Doug's Federal Vision teaching is also a concern, however, I appreciate that might not be a concern for others.

Lastly, but by no means least, Doug's view of Slavery calls into question how Doug does research, as well as how he views power. Rather than rejecting the slave-master religion that used scripture to legitimise gross misuses of power, Doug affirms it.

So overall, Doug's ministry teaches a twisted use of power, that legitimises mistreating women and black and brown people.