

Men, women, and locker rooms

By [James Calvin Schaap](#)

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As I remember it, it was one of those nights when long talks somehow emerge from the miasma, not for any particular reason, at least none that I can recall. We were lying in bed and just started talking. I don't remember any rumpus or argument. It was, years ago, one of those married-people talks that couldn't find the on/off switch.

I'm guessing the subject came up because I'd been thinking about a female colleague who'd told me once upon a time, mid-1980s, that the only difference between men and women was hardware. I liked her, but I couldn't buy the argument. She was an early feminist for our tribe of conservative Christians, but her characterization seemed to me to be on the other side of unreasonable—and just plain hard to believe.

So the two of us, my wife and I, were talking that night, and it was late, and, as I said, there really wasn't any provocation. It was all about gender and what a puzzle that really is. Sometimes. No, often.

That night she told me something I'd never considered and therefore never forgot. I'll put it in quotes, but exactly how it went is long gone: "Here I am, in bed, with someone twice my size. Men don't understand that a woman has to live with the fact that she's always smaller, always at risk."

Let's be clear. I'd never abused her. She was simply telling me that physical size played a significant role in human perception. "Think of it this way," she said in the darkness, "I know very well that any time you wanted to beat on me, there's not much I could do." Something like that. "Men *never* think that way. Women *always* do."

She was explaining a radical difference in perception I'd never thought about, that women perceive physicality via givens men don't begin to know or therefore can even imagine. That's what the woman I married taught me years ago, in bed, in the wee hours of the night. Even now, decades later, I can tell you I know what she

meant, but I can't know—nor will I ever know—exactly what she feels.

I'm not interested in laying more curses on Donald Trump. He has sufficient burdens to carry with probably more to come.

But I couldn't help but remember that late night discussion when Beth Moore, for the first time in her immense Bible study ministry, [started talking politics this week](#), something she'd never done before. When she determined she could no longer be silent, Moore said: "I'm one among many women sexually abused, misused, stared down, heckled, talked naughty to. Like we liked it. We didn't. We're tired of it."

Then she turned her attention to evangelical men: "Try to absorb how acceptable the disesteem and objectifying of women has been when some Christian leaders don't think it's that big a deal."

Moore speaks from experience, uniquely female experience.

I've heard some of Donald's female supporters claim, as does he, that his cock-and-bull with Billy Bush was basically "locker room talk," something—chortle, chortle—every man does when he's with the boys. Really? Maybe the good doctor Ben Carson is right when he told some female journalist it was her problem she hadn't heard men talk about grabbing women's privates.

But I can't help but wonder whether men who don't see what Trump said as anything more than regrettable locker room banter don't hear—and feel—what Donald Trump said in a wholly different way than most women do.

Beth Moore knows very well that she hears and feels Trump's words with pain far greater than anything felt by Gary Bauer, James Dobson, Jerry Falwell Jr., or any other male (so-called) evangelical.

Or me.

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