

WOMEN'S ROLES IN THE CHURCH:
A POLICY AND CURRICULUM FOR
GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH, FREMONT, OHIO

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by

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ABSTRACT

WOMEN'S ROLES IN THE CHURCH: A POLICY AND CURRICULUM FOR GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH, FREMONT, OHIO

by

Zachary K. Pinkerton

The issue of women's roles in the church has become a sensitive one in society today. A quick glance on the internet shows that people hold a variety of beliefs. Yet, churches throughout the world construct their beliefs on the topic using God's Word. In an ever-changing world, it is the responsibility of church leaders to discover, using Scripture, how God designed men and women to function within His church.

Both men and women have been called to serve in the church in a variety of ways. God has uniquely gifted us, as believers in Christ, to accomplish His work (Rom. 12:6-8). Christians must strive to carry out the mission of the church, in the way God has instructed.

This project aims to create a curriculum and policy for Grace Community Church in Fremont, Ohio to help church leaders navigate this challenging, yet crucial topic. In order to accomplish this, we must first and foremost examine the Scriptures. Consideration of church history, as well as, the views and opinions of fellow pastors, church staff, and the local congregation will also assist in the creation of the curriculum and policy.

To Kaitlyn, my funny wife who makes me laugh.

You sacrificed as much as I did, so I could achieve my academic goals.

Thank you for your understanding, prayers, and support.

To Toby, Wes, and Lizzie, you have brought me great joy

by giving me much needed escape from my work.

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CHAPTER 1

THE NEED FOR A DISCUSSION

Society has always been in a cycle of change. This change begins with simple ideas that take hold in the minds of the people of a particular culture. As ideas start to shift, they challenge a culture's traditional views and change becomes increasingly certain. The United States is no exception. The economic, technological, and social changes that are taking place throughout American society are so comprehensive and traumatic that all institutions are affected.¹ No one is truly isolated. Change is inevitable.²

The church is no exception. Changes that occur in society will also permeate the church, and the church must consider its response to be an important part of its calling. By nature, though, people seem to resist change within the walls of the church.³ Some congregations deny that cultural changes are actually occurring while others attempt to minimize their significance. Still others try to insulate themselves from the effects of cultural shifts completely. In the end, however, all churches will face the impact of the culture change, whether or not they acknowledge it.⁴ Unfortunately, there are countless examples of churches that refuse to acknowledge and adapt to their changing society and culture. Many of these churches begin to slowly die off as they lose relevance in their

¹ Eddie Gibbs, *Church Morph: How Megatrends Are Reshaping Christian Communities* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009), 11.

² Leith Anderson, *Dying for Change: An Arresting Look at the New Realities Confronting Churches and Para-Church Ministries* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 1990), 11.

³ Gary L. McIntosh and Charles Arn, *What Every Pastor Should Know: 101 Indispensable Rules of Thumb for Leading Your Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 216.

⁴ Gibbs, *Morph*, 11.

culture and communities. Other congregations do the opposite and change too freely, ignoring many of the teachings of the New Testament. What is acceptable to change and what must remain the same in order to be the church Christ envisioned in the New Testament? These are questions that all church leaders must ask.

One of the most pressing issues within the church today is the question of women's roles in church ministry. Over the past several decades the feminist movement has had a significant influence on how people think about women working in the church.⁵ Many believers, including church leaders, have questions, but no clear understanding of what Scripture has to say about women's roles within the church. In fact, many believers are afraid to broach the subject in fear of starting an argument or offending others who think differently. The church is in dire need of a discussion on this topic; church leaders must not shy away from it.

MINISTRY PROBLEM

Over the past several decades, there has been increasing demand to solve the tension that exists between modern and traditional stances on women's roles within the church. My main concern for the project is not necessarily to solve this tension. It would be impossible to walk through every scenario and give definite answers as to how a leader should respond in each case. My main goal, rather, is to present a series of guidelines to help the leaders on staff at my local church, as well as leaders within our

⁵ H. Wayne House, *The Role of Women in Ministry Today: Affirming the Biblical Position of Women in the Church* (Nashville: Nelson, 1990), 9.

congregation make biblically grounded decisions in matters of women's roles in everyday ministry.

I first encountered the tension inherent to this topic a few years ago when directing a large conference of about 2,700 students and adult leaders. During the conference, one of the speakers insisted that his wife share her testimony and speak during one of our main sessions. I allowed it, but as I listened to her share her testimony and preach from the Bible, it occurred to me that I was probably going to have several youth pastors waiting for me after the session with concerns about having a woman preach. Sure enough, I did. It was in that moment I realized that I needed to figure out where I stood on this issue; an issue that wasn't going away any time soon. Since then, this issue has popped up time after time as we work together doing ministry with other churches.

Christians tend to be all over the map when it comes to female leadership within the American church. It is not difficult, for instance, to find female lead or senior pastors, especially in mainline protestant denominations, such as Methodist, Episcopalian, and Lutheran congregations. Many churches have women sitting on their governing boards, while others do not. A woman in my own family has sat on her church's governing board for many years. I've heard some pastors argue that women can teach men, but only under the authority of a male senior pastor. I have close friends who fall in this camp. Other friends of mine who lead ministries do not allow women to serve as a pastor or to preach during a service, but they would allow women to speak from the Bible to any gathering outside the church. Some churches are much stricter and do not have women speak to male teenagers, and some may not even allow women to teach young boys and children.

While I was in college at Liberty University, I remember debating a friend in my dormitory about women serving in leadership positions. He firmly believed that women should not be allowed to fully lead in any organization. For example, my friend stated that he would never vote for a woman to be president of the United States, because of “Scripture’s stance” on female leadership. I strongly opposed him.

Recently, there has been a resurgence of interest in this topic within the Charis Fellowship, a network of churches that my local church currently belongs to. A parachurch organization affiliated with the Charis Fellowship, Encompass World Partners, recently created a task force to study the role and dignity of women throughout Scripture. This task force then created a working group to study and articulate a “robust theology of women” within a defined theological boundary for Encompass to use as a guideline for mission work.⁶ The results of this study were then used to produce an anthology presenting a comprehensive theology of women on mission. The final anthology strongly suggests women should be permitted to be pastors and teach men within the Charis Fellowship.

During the 2019 annual business meeting for the Charis Fellowship, there was a prolonged debate regarding what to do about a church within the Fellowship that had just appointed a woman to the role of Executive Pastor and co-leader of the church. The debate was heated, as people spoke passionately on both sides of the argument. At debate’s end, no consensus had been reached on what the Fellowship’s leadership should do.

⁶ Louise Klawitter, “History,” in *A Missional Mosaic: An Anthology Presented by the WoRTh Project: Working Towards A Robust Theology of Women on Mission* (Atlanta: Encompass World Publishing, 2017), 7.

In winter 2020, another parachurch organization connected with the Charis Fellowship, Grace Connect, published a quarterly magazine on the subject of women in ministry. Although none of the contributors took a hard stand with a specific belief, the publication's singular focus on women's roles in church ministry signaled the continuing importance of this subject.

Opinions abound, and most are rooted in Scripture, but it is impossible for all of them to be correct. I realize there may not be a perfect answer for every scenario, but I believe God lays out a general guide to follow through His Word. We are reminded by the Psalmist that we learn to walk along the slippery paths of this life by using Scripture as our light.⁷ Ministry can be complicated, and Scripture is the place we must turn to when faced with problems and decisions.

ASSUMPTIONS

There are several important assumptions that this project will be founded upon. It assumes its readers acknowledge and agree with these assumptions as a foundation for discussion on the topic of women's roles within the local church. Opposition to or difference in these core beliefs could undermine productive and focused discussion on the subject.

⁷ H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Psalms* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1959), 846.

The Bible is the Word of God

The most important assumption undergirding this project is the belief that the sixty-six books of the Protestant canon alone are invested with divine authority, and that no outside source equals or surpasses that of Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16). Scripture is the infallible truth and final authority when it comes to living life God's way.⁸ If God cannot err, and if the Bible is truly the Word of God, then the Bible cannot have error.⁹ That means it is impossible for Scripture to contradict itself, and it is impossible for every view regarding women's roles within ministry to be biblically accurate.

Not only are the sixty-six canonical books of the Old and New Testaments the Word of God, but the Protestant canon is forever closed; there can be nothing added to or subtracted from it. This was the prevailing belief of the church from a very early point.¹⁰ Jude reminds us that there is no new revelation that can change the essence of our faith (Jude 1:3).¹¹ John, the author of Revelation, also warns that the act of adding to or taking away from Scripture, suggests a will that is out of harmony with God's (Rev. 22:18-19).¹² Throughout Scripture, God provides many warnings against tampering with His Word (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:6).¹³

⁸ Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology Vol. 1* (Minneapolis: Bethany House, 2002), 241.

⁹ Norman Geisler and Thomas Howe, *When Critics Ask: A Popular Handbook on Bible Difficulties* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1992), 11.

¹⁰ D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 737.

¹¹ Peter J. Davids, *The Letters of 2 Peter and Jude*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 42.

¹² Robert L. Thomas, *Revelation 8-22, An Exegetical Commentary* (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 519.

¹³ John F. Walvoord, *The Revelation of Jesus Christ* (Chicago: Moody, 1966), 338.

Men and Women Are Created Equal

In the beginning, God created man and woman in His own image (Gen. 1:27). Sexuality is not an accident of nature, nor a biological phenomenon created by God; it is a gift from God.¹⁴ God chose to make both man (Gen. 2:7) and woman (Gen. 2:18). Being made in God's image is not primarily a physical reality, but something deeper and uniquely special. Bible scholar Henry Morris explains that God gave both men and women certain special attributes, such as; a moral consciousness, the ability to think abstractly, an understanding of beauty and emotion, and the capacity for worshiping and loving God.¹⁵ God specifically chose to make both males and females and He specifically chose to make them out of His divine image. The concept of God's divine image reminds us that all humans, no matter their sex, have intrinsic value.

Paul addresses this subject in his letter to the Galatian church. He makes it clear that one's dignity before God doesn't depend on race, social or economic status, or sex; rather, all people who have accepted Christ into their lives are all one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28). Both male and female believers possess the same spiritual privileges, led by the same Spirit, justified by the same blood, adopted into the same family, regenerated by the same grace, preserved by the same power, as they believe in the same gospel.¹⁶

The idea of all Christians being equal is reinforced throughout Paul's letters (Rom. 1:16; 2:9-10; 3:9; 10:12; 1 Cor. 1:24; 10:32). It is important to note that in his

¹⁴ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 138-139.

¹⁵ Henry M. Morris, *The Genesis Record: A Scientific & Devotional Commentary on the Book of Beginnings* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1976), 74.

¹⁶ Joseph S. Exell, *Galatians*, The Biblical Illustrator (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958), 223-225.

letter to the Galatian church, Paul is not talking about any kind of physical transformation. One does not stop being a man or woman upon having a relationship with Jesus. Rather, Paul is explaining the spiritual domain of God's household in which all Christians are equally sons and daughters of God (John 1:12, Rom. 8:14, Gal. 3:26, Phil. 2:15, 1 John 3:1-2).¹⁷ In one sense, all humans are children of God since God is our creator (Isa. 45:11-12). In a distinct sense, the Jews have God as their father (Deut. 32:6-12; Isa. 43:6-7; Mal. 2:10). But Christians are children of God in the fullest and most permanent sense.¹⁸ We must recognize that all Christians have equal access to God; from the pastor of a mega church, to the new believer who has just given their life to Christ. Men and women are equal before God and share the same privileges in their relationships with their true Father.

The Church Matters

The way we *do* church matters to God. It seems as though many Christians today believe that God wants them to go to church, but that God isn't necessarily interested in the kind of church, what the church teaches, or how the church functions. These people assume God wants them to be a part of a "Christian" community, but the differences in theological beliefs or practices are not important. Many of these believers would argue that churches should not dwell on differences but work together to help those in the surrounding community. While it is clear that God commands His believers to have

¹⁷ R. C. H. Lenski, *Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians*, Commentary on the New Testament (Peabody, Hendrickson, 1937), 188-189.

¹⁸ Robert W. Yarbrough, *1-3 John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 175.

unity, we must also remember that unity must be centered around truth (Rom. 15:5, 1 Cor. 1:10, Eph. 4:3, Phil. 2:2, Col. 3:14, 1 Pet. 3:8, etc.).

Old Testament books, such as Exodus, show us just how detailed God is about public worship. God not only gave the Israelites specific laws to follow, but also instructions on the specifications for tools to be used in worship. Only Aaron and his four sons were permitted to serve as priests to stand before God offering sacrifices according to God's instructions.¹⁹ God takes worship seriously.

We see the same kind of precise direction for worship in the New Testament as well. The early church in Jerusalem is a perfect example for understanding the importance of being part of a Christ-centered church. We are told the Jerusalem church pursued four key areas together; teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayer (Acts 2:42).²⁰ All churches should practice these things, along with administering communion and baptism.

New Testament authors are not vague about how the church should operate. Luke, for instance, explains that the church should be growing (Acts 2:47). Paul describes the church as a body of believers continually growing into a holy temple in the Lord (Eph. 2:21), with its people willing to suffer, and share in sacrifice for each other (Col. 1:24). Peter reminds us that the church is to be ready to proclaim the Gospel to anyone who may ask (1 Pet. 3:15). The author of Hebrews says the church should meet together regularly (Heb. 10:24-25). God desires a body of believers to fellowship with one another and to

¹⁹ Walter C. Kaiser, Jr., *Exodus*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 464.

²⁰ Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2007), 149.

come together to learn truth. Paul also explains the correct way to use the gift of tongues within a church gathering (1 Cor. 14), how to handle divisions within the congregation (Rom. 16:17), and how to administer church discipline to members (1 Cor. 5:3-5). Last, and most central to our discussion, we see that Paul is very specific when it comes to qualifications for church leaders (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1:6-16).

Scripture is so detailed about the way we *do* church. Much of the New Testament is devoted to the *dos* and the *don'ts* of church worship. It is crucial we understand that God has provided commands and guidelines about how the church should function. This is why the questions posed in this project are so important. If God has called only men to lead or teach in the church, then we need to obey God's commands because doing so is best for the congregation. If God has given the church the freedom to permit both men and women to lead, then it would be sin to restrict either sex. When we deviate from God's designs and commands, the entire church suffers. It is essential, then, that we understand God's design for church leadership. The way we *do* church matters.

Gender is Biological

Hardly a week goes by, it seems, without there being some sort of gender or transgender related story in the news.²¹ Gender identity refers to the act of identifying oneself as male, female, or somewhere along a spectrum. Many times, gender identity runs contrary to biological sex.²² The gender debate is a controversial and oft emotional

²¹ Vaughan Roberts, *Transgender* (Purcellville: The Good Book Company, 2016), 13.

²² Mark A. Yarhouse, *Understanding Sexual Identity* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 26.

topic in western society, and it's crucial we address it before discussing male and female leadership roles within the church.

God makes it clear that He created two distinct sexes (Gen. 2:27).²³ Within the creation account, God distinguishes animals by “their kinds” (Gen. 1:24), but He designates humans by sexuality: “male and female He created them.”²⁴ There is no evidence that God designed males or females with the ability to choose their sex or gender. In fact, the distinct sexes are specific and integral to God’s creation of humans. It would be accurate, then, to say that men and women do *not* have the ability nor the right to transition to the opposite sex.

God affirms the reality of two distinct sexes—and by extension He also affirms what true masculinity and femininity look like—in His Law to the Israelites.²⁵ God reminds His people that men should act like men, and women should act like women; anything outside these bounds is an abomination (Deut. 22:5). Thus, not only are we, as humans, to conduct ourselves in a manner fitting to our biological sex, but we should also be satisfied with the way God has made us.²⁶

God’s creative design was for every human to identify as one of two distinct genders: male or female. Both the Old and New Testaments depict there being two genders. Because of this, we can say with confidence that the Old and New Testament

²³ All Scripture quotations are from the New American Standard Bible unless otherwise noted.

²⁴ Hamilton, *Genesis*, 138.

²⁵ Mark A. Yarhouse, *Understanding Gender Dysphoria: Navigating Transgender Issues in a Changing Culture* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2015), 32.

²⁶ John Peter Lange, *Numbers, Deuteronomy*, Lange’s Commentary on the Holy Scriptures (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 165.

writers are referring to biological males and females when addressing men and women. It would be outside God's designs for a male identifying as a female to use Scripture to support their inclusivity regarding females' roles within the church. Likewise, it would be wrong for a female identifying as a male to use Scripture to support their inclusivity regarding males' roles within the church.

Unity is Key

God desires all believers to be united in truth. King David celebrated the beauty of brothers living together "in unity" (Psalm 133:1). The Hebrew word used for unity literally means "together."²⁷ God's people were meant to be together and work together. So often we, as God's people, let little differences divide us.

As Jesus was healing the sick and driving out demons at the beginning of His ministry (Mark 3:10-11), the scribes came down from Jerusalem and said that Jesus was possessed by Beelzebul. Beelzebul was considered the prince of demons and was identified with Satan.²⁸ In response, Jesus explained that a kingdom or house divided against itself will not stand (Mark 3:22-25). His point is that if Satan is divided in his allegiance, then he should also become powerless; yet this was clearly not so.²⁹ The same concept can be applied to the church. If the church remains divided on small differences, how can it stand?

²⁷ Nola J. Opperwall-Galluch, "Unity," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia Vol. 4*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 947.

²⁸ Steven Barabas, "Baal-zebub," in *New International Bible Dictionary*, eds. J.D. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 115.

²⁹ William L. Lane, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 143.

Paul reminds us that one of our main goals ought to be unity in faith (Eph. 4:13). Unity in the New Testament speaks of a faith that binds together the people of God.³⁰ Such unity comes when a body of believers affirms God's truth together.³¹ The Gospel is the most important teaching in all of Scripture and the most essential ground for unity within the church, but unity should be achieved around lesser teachings within the New Testament, such as our topic here.

Whether Paul is writing to the Galatians, Corinthians, or Ephesians, he expects every church to hear and obey his teachings. Likewise, the New Testament teachings apply to all churches today, regardless of societal or cultural differences. For our contemporary context, then, Scripture's teachings on women's roles in ministry cannot change from one church or culture to the next. If Paul teaches that women are free to practice their spiritual gifts within the church as men do, then this truth applies to all churches in our current culture. Likewise, if Paul teaches that women are restricted in certain areas of ministry, then all churches today should obey this teaching. It cannot be that Paul restricts women in some churches but not in others. All churches should be united in truth; believers do not have the privilege of deciding what truth to follow and what truth to discard.

Paul warns church leaders about false teachings, commanding us to accurately handle truth (2 Tim. 2:15). The participle of *orthotomeo* in this verse means to cut straight. It was used to describe any carefully performed task.³² According to Paul, then,

³⁰ Arthur B. Fowler, "Unity," in *New International Bible Dictionary*, eds. J.D. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 1043.

³¹ Frank Thielman, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2010), 281.

no culture or outside pressure should influence or bend the way we determine truth. It is this same truth which Paul encourages us to cling to unashamedly.

Churches around the globe should have unity regarding God's truth. Does that mean that churches will agree on every specific belief or doctrine? No. Is it God's will for all churches to be completely united under the truth given to us through the Scriptures? Yes. Believers must decide what truth is essential to the Christian faith and what truth is not. Substantial theological differences do not make unity possible, but insubstantial differences may not be important enough to divide the church. This is a question that will be addressed in chapter one when discussing the biblical and theological foundations for the project.

Believers should constantly seek to apply truth in their lives. Peter summarizes his first epistle by reminding us that we are to be harmonious, sympathetic, brotherly, kindhearted, and humble in spirit (1 Pet. 3:8). This is a unity that comes from a common focus on Jesus' mind and spirit.³³ We should all be united in our endeavor to have this focus and united in the Biblical truth we find (Rom. 15:5, 1 Cor. 1:10, Eph. 4:3, Phil. 2:2, Col. 3:14, etc.). What a blessing! We as God's people can experience true unity!

³² John MacArthur, *2 Timothy*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 75-76.

³³ Peter H. Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 124.

PERTINENT DEFINITIONS

There are a few words that will be used throughout the project that must be defined at the outset. These words are common in today's debate on women's roles within the local church. Most Christian leaders will fall into one of five camps: patriarchy, complementarianism, partial egalitarianism, full egalitarianism, or evangelical feminism.

Patriarchy

Patriarchy refers to the societal structure wherein men control a disproportionately large share of status and power.³⁴ This system has been used throughout history, where men have been dominant in culture and society. Those who hold patriarchy believe that men should lead in every aspect of the church. Individuals who align with this belief often point back to the patriarchal narrative in Genesis. The theme of the narrative is the partial fulfillment of God's covenant and promises that flow from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.³⁵ Many who fall into this camp recognize the specific ways God has chosen to interact with mankind, and how God has regularly used men in fulfilling his purposes.

Complementarianism

Complementarianism is a complex view in that it is claimed by many church leaders who hold opposing beliefs. It is hard to define, and it has been regularly

³⁴ *Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield: Merriam-Webster Inc., 1994), 852.

³⁵ Frederic W. Bush, "Patriarchs," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986), 690-695.

misappropriated or used out of context. Traditionally, complementarianism refers to the idea that men and women are created equal but are assigned different roles in two important areas of life: the home and the church. Within these two areas, complementarians believe God has given men not just the role, but also the responsibility to lead. Most complementarians believe that women should not be ordained as pastors, sit on the governing board of the local church, or teach men. There are many passages that proponents of complementarianism point towards to show that this view is in line with God's designs.

Partial Egalitarianism

Many Christian leaders have issues with aspects of complementarianism, but insist they are still complementarians. I have several friends who label themselves as complementarians but have no problem with women preaching at a Sunday morning church service. Others believe that women should be called pastors. Those that hold to this view believe that men should lead, but that women can exercise spiritual gifts of teaching or leading under the authority of a man. Throughout this project I will be labeling these people partial egalitarians.

Full Egalitarianism

Egalitarianism refers to the belief that men and women share identical roles within marriage and the church.³⁶ Many who hold this view seek to replace the hierarchy of male over female by focusing on reciprocal relations and mutual submission in

³⁶ House, *Role of Women*, 15.

relationships.³⁷ They argue that men and women are created equal in the eyes of God, much like complementarians, but that God has given them identical roles within both the family and the church. They point to passages such as Galatians 3, where Paul explains there is neither male or female, and that we are all one in Christ (Gal. 3:28). Full egalitarians often argue that women should be pastors and elders.

Evangelical Feminism

Much like egalitarians, evangelical feminists contend that there are no leadership roles in the church reserved for men, but that women as well as men can be pastors and elders.³⁸ In fact, many evangelical feminists claim that women are better than men when it comes to leadership in ministry. Women have the ability to offer a unique and refreshing perspective and thus should have elevated value. Many evangelical feminists firmly believe that women should be desired as leaders over men.

PROCEDURE

Each chapter of this project will cover a unique aspect of the issue of women's ministry roles within the church. Scripture has a lot to say about this topic, and that is exactly where we will start. Chapter two will define the biblical and theological foundations for this project. We will expound on each of the main passages of the New Testament that both complementarians and egalitarians use to support their viewpoints.

³⁷ Stanley J. Grenz, *Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1995), 18.

³⁸ Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism: A New Path to Liberalism?* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 15.

Analysis of the many examples throughout the Old and New Testaments where God used women for ministry purposes will play a key role in our discussion and we will also examine the creation account and the fall of mankind, focusing on the relationship between Adam and Eve. Each of these passages will help guide us to an accurate understanding of God's design for women's roles in local church ministry.

Chapter three explores the extra-biblical foundations of the project by considering a historical approach of the topic. There are myriad ramifications one must consider when looking into this issue. Did the early church deal with this problem? If so, how did they approach it? Has the church addressed this issue in other eras? What can we learn from these examples?

This chapter will also be focused inward on the Charis Fellowship (formerly the Grace Brethren Fellowship). It is important we look at the churches and church leaders within our own church family. By analyzing an anonymous and voluntary survey sent out to most Charis Fellowship pastors, we will unpack where the majority of Charis Fellowship leaders stand on this issue. Using the information gathered in this survey, we can identify trends and better predict how the church's perspectives on this topic may develop in the years ahead. Furthermore, we will examine whether pastors and church leaders are able to defend their beliefs biblically.

In addition to the Charis Fellowship survey, we will analyze the results of an anonymous and voluntary local church survey, which was sent to members of Grace Community Church in Fremont, Ohio. Our goal is to understand the positions and beliefs of people within our own congregation. The information gathered from this survey will be crucial when organizing a curriculum and policy.

Evaluation strategy and results will be the main focus of chapter four. We will use a mixed methods approach to analyze the survey and discuss results. All of the data gathered will be considered as we form a practical conclusion for local church ministry.

Chapter five takes the conclusions reached from evaluation and offers a strategy for implementation. This section will include a women's ministry policy for Grace Community Church in Fremont, Ohio. The policy will assist church leaders within my local congregation who are faced with various issues that arise from the question of women in ministry. Should women lead? If so, is there a line? Can they teach men? Can they teach youth? Does God desire women to be restricted at all? How does God envision women serving the local church? Each of these questions will be answered according to the results shared. The policy will help guide Christian leaders as they navigate ministry in the modern age.

Chapter six offers concluding observations and recommendations. Focus is placed on specific questions pertinent to church leaders: Where is the line? Are women free to practice their spiritual gifts? (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:28; Eph. 4:11) If so, in what setting or capacity? What are women allowed to do within the church and what are women not permitted to do based solely on Scripture? Broad recommendations are offered on how the church should proceed. These recommendations will be created for my local church and will address the issues that accompany working together with other congregations, such as the Charis Fellowship.

Last, a curriculum is provided in the appendix. This curriculum will be used to teach staff members, leaders, and members of the congregation about God's desire regarding women in ministry. Frequently, I have women asking why churches restrict

women from leading or teaching. This curriculum will attempt to address these questions, while giving a biblical account of how God desires the church to function in our contemporary age.

CHAPTER 2

BIBLICAL & THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS

When having a discussion concerning ministry, one must always begin in the Scriptures. God speaks to believers through His Word and has a specific message for His church. This chapter is the most important part of this project, for in it we will examine God's Word in order to understand His desires for how the church should function.

Pastors, writers, and laypeople on both sides of the argument often point to experiences they have had as a way of supporting and defending their viewpoints. Personal experiences and anecdotes are not inherently bad. In fact, they are often helpful. The risk here is in valuing one's experiences, or what one perceives, over God's Word. Scripture trumps experience and tradition every time.

One of the key determinations we must make when confronted with a theological issue within the church is determining how essential the issue is to the central beliefs of Christianity. Albert Mohler does a great job clarifying the essential beliefs of Christian faith by organizing doctrines into three distinct levels of importance. The first level includes the most fundamental doctrines to Christianity. Next, second level doctrines are still important, but less so. Christians may disagree on second level issues, and these disagreements tend to cause significant barriers between churches. Last, the third level applies to doctrines and beliefs that Christians commonly differ on while remaining in close fellowship with each other.³⁹

³⁹ Albert Mohler, "A Call for Theological Triage and Christian Maturity," July 12, 2005, <https://albertmohler.com/2005/07/12/a-call-for-theological-triage-and-christian-maturity/>.

I would classify the controversy of women in ministry as being a second level issue. This issue has nothing to do with the essential teachings of Scripture in regard to saving faith. Doctrines like the trinity or the resurrection are absolutely essential to the Christian faith. No one can be a true Christian without believing in these things. On the other hand, people can have different opinions about women in ministry and still fellowship as true brothers and sisters in Christ. Differences on this issue do, however, create significant barriers. Many churches would never allow a woman to lead or teach within the congregation, while in other churches women serve at the highest levels and teach their congregations on Sunday mornings.

I would caution anyone tempted to place this issue in Mohler's third level, or to "sweep it under the rug." The ramifications are serious. If Scripture forbids women from serving as elders or from teaching men, then permitting such would hurt the whole church body and possibly cause sin. If Scripture encourages women to all forms of ministry, then excluding women from leadership or teaching roles would be like shooting oneself in the foot; the entire church body would miss out on tangible benefit.

IN THE BEGINNING

Genesis contains two accounts of God's creation of human beings. The first account, presented in Genesis one, simply records God's decision to make humans in His image, and the words God used to implement this decision.⁴⁰ Genesis two offers a more detailed account about the *way* God created people. We are told how God chose to create and form the first man and woman; His actions and even the materials He used. The

⁴⁰ Millard J. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 498.

creation accounts of Genesis one and two offer a unique perspective of God's creative mind. God is the sole cause behind the creation of the universe and humankind, and both men and women are His dependent creatures.⁴¹ God created man and woman to be equal; purposely designed to bear His image (Gen. 1:26, 27).

Created in His Image

Being created in God's image is a key message of Genesis.⁴² Genesis points to the *imago dei*, one of the most profound and important doctrines throughout the Bible.⁴³ God chose to make mankind, both male and female, in His image (Gen. 1:27). God didn't create Adam and then choose to make Eve like the rest of the creatures. Scripture specifically tells us that mankind—male and female—was created in His image. Adam was created first, then Eve; but both were created in God's likeness. There is no indication that Eve was created lesser in any way.

We see this concept throughout the rest of the Bible. It is mentioned elsewhere in Genesis (Gen. 5:1, 3; 9:6), as well as the New Testament. Paul describes mankind as "the image and glory of God" (1 Cor. 11:7). He also encourages believers to put on the new self "in the likeness of God," which was created in righteousness, holiness, and truth (Eph. 4:24). Paul makes a similar claim in his letter to the Colossians (Col. 3:10). James

⁴¹ Tremper Longman and Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 57.

⁴² Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 68.

⁴³ Carl F. H. Henry, "Image of God," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 591-594.

reminds his readers that we should never curse others, because we have all been “made in the likeness of God” (James 3:9).

Being made in the likeness of God grants us a dignity, responsibility, and a certain potential capacity to reflect our Creator.⁴⁴ God created mankind as His supreme creature, and therefore all people possess a unique spiritual nature and special relationship with their Creator.⁴⁵ David proclaims that man was made a little lower than the angels, and God crowns mankind with glory and majesty (Ps. 8:5). This passage reminds us that our time on earth is short, and that when our time on earth is finished, the saints will no longer be lower than angels but join them as immortal heavenly beings.⁴⁶ This future life is part of what it means to be made in God’s image, and it is equally available for men and women.

From the beginning, God created man to rule over the earth and subdue it (Gen. 1:28). Now, men and women are very different from the animals, which God also created. Unlike humans, though, God did not create animals in his likeness. In fact, King David reminds us that God has given humans dominion over the earth and has put all things under our feet. This dominion extends to beasts of the field, birds of the sky, and fish of the sea (Ps. 8:7-8). Jesus further explained that to Him humans are of much greater value than any other created thing (Matt. 10:31). Likewise, in His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus was not claiming to lack concern for animals, such as the birds of the air (Matt.

⁴⁴ John H. Walton, *Genesis*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 137.

⁴⁵ Steven Barabas and J. A. Motyer, “Image of God,” in *New International Bible Dictionary*, eds. J. D. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 462-463.

⁴⁶ C. H. Spurgeon, *The Treasury of David* (Nashville: Nelson, n.d.), 82.

6:25-34). Quite the opposite—He carefully watches over them!⁴⁷ Rather, His love for people is so great that His tender care for a bird simply pales in comparison. He loves every human deeply and extends this love to all mankind, both men and women.

Mankind is something wonderful. Although man is a creature, humans are the highest among them and have been made so by the Lord of the universe.⁴⁸ This makes us unique and special. Mankind, being part of both the physical and spiritual realm, was created for Christ's glory (Isa. 43:7; Eph. 1:11-12). Humans, created as male and female, are like God in many ways and represent Him.⁴⁹ This was God's design. Creation was incomplete without mankind.⁵⁰ Recall that after God had made man and woman, He pronounced that "it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). God was extremely pleased to create man and woman in His image.

Insights on Genesis 2

Genesis 2 describes the creation of Adam in fascinating detail: "Then the Lord God formed man of the dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being" (Gen. 2:7). This passage emphasizes not only that God created man, but also the *way* God chose to create man—that is, He created man first and in a manner that was both unique and creative.⁵¹

⁴⁷ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 404-405.

⁴⁸ Elmer L. Towns, *Theology for Today* (Mason: Cengage, 2008), 565.

⁴⁹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), 442.

⁵⁰ Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology: A Popular Systematic Guide to Understanding Biblical Truth* (Chicago: Moody, 1999), 216.

God Created Adam First

Many complementarians and those that hold a patriarchal view are quick to point out that God created Adam *before* Eve. God planted a garden and placed man therein to cultivate and keep it (Gen. 2:8; 15). Before Eve was formed, God commanded Adam to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Gen. 2:16-17). Before Eve was formed, God brought the animals to Adam for him to name (Gen. 2:19).⁵² Thus, before Eve was formed, Adam was already fulfilling his role on earth by subduing and ruling over it. Not until he was naming the animals do we read of his desire for a suitable helper. In fact, it was his longing for a suitable helper, which he couldn't find among the existing creation, that led to God creating the first woman.

Many partial egalitarians, egalitarians, and evangelical feminists claim that the order of creation does not indicate authority or hierarchy between the two genders. Others, like Stanley Grenz, point to the creation account of Genesis 1, where God creates in ascending order; that is, where God's highest creation comes on the last day.⁵³ In applying this reasoning to Genesis 2, Grenz argues that woman is the highest creation and therefore possesses a level of authority and leadership over man.

It is important to note here that Eve was specifically created for Adam while mankind was not created for the animals. Yes, the animals were created first, but they were specifically created for man, as was the entire Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:19). Likewise, the woman was formed as the appropriate helper for Adam.

⁵¹ Erickson, *Theology*, 498.

⁵² Alexander Strauch, *Men and Women Equal Yet Different: A Brief Study of The Biblical Passages on Gender* (Littleton: Lewis & Roth, 1999), 21.

⁵³ Grenz, *Women*, 161.

A Helper

Genesis makes it clear that Adam could not find a helper suitable for him after naming the animals. This was the basis for creating woman. Adam needed help fulfilling his purpose of taking care of the garden while ruling over the earth. Scholar Victor Hamilton explains that Adam already had God as a superior helper and the animals as inferior helpers. The creation of Eve gave Adam a helper equal to him.⁵⁴

After every day of creation, God *saw that it was good*. This means every created thing, including the animals and humans, was perfect according to its kind and capable of accomplishing the purpose of its existence.⁵⁵ But God also declared, “It is *not good* for the man to be alone” (Gen. 2:18). The woman was needed to complete man’s character, his need of fellowship, and his position as head of the race.⁵⁶ The man needed the woman.

Some evangelical feminists respond that “this proves that men need help!”⁵⁷ Others focus on the word: *ezer*, helper. Evangelical feminist, Linda L. Belleville points out that all other seventeen occurrences of this word in the Old Testament have to do with someone of strength offering needed assistance. In fact, fifteen of the nineteen occurrences of *ezer* speak of the help God provides to His people.⁵⁸ Hosea speaks of Israel rebelling against their *helper* as they lived in opposition to God’s will (Hosea

⁵⁴ Victor P. Hamilton, “Genesis,” in *Evangelical Commentary on the Bible*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1989), 13.

⁵⁵ C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, n.d.), 67.

⁵⁶ W. H. Griffith Thomas, *Genesis: A Devotional Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1946), 42.

⁵⁷ Dan Doriani, *Women and Ministry: What the Bible Teaches* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2003), 58.

⁵⁸ Linda L. Belleville, “Women In Ministry” in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, eds. James R. Beck, Craig L. Blomberg, and Stanley N. Gundry (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 142.

13:9).⁵⁹ Egalitarians contend that to use *ezer* to support the subordination of women is ridiculous since the same word is used to describe God throughout the Old Testament. They argue that God clearly cannot be subordinate to His creation. Therefore, an argument based on the word *helper* is invalid.

In response, many scholars argue that God can in fact subordinate Himself to human beings, with Jesus's death on the cross being the ultimate example. Raymond C. Ortlund explains that it is entirely possible for God to subordinate Himself to humans:

He (God) does so whenever He undertakes to help us. He does not "un-God" Himself in helping us; but He does stoop to our needs, according to His gracious and sovereign will.

Similarly, I subordinate myself to my children when I help them with their homework. I do not empty my mind of my own knowledge; but I do come down to their level to see their questions from their perspective and to point them toward solutions they can understand. Their needs set my agenda. In this sense I subordinate myself to my children...⁶⁰

Complementarians like Ortlund argue that subordination happens whenever God serves His people. They believe that as a servant, you are subordinating yourself to the one you serve. Not only do they believe that serving and subordination go hand in hand, but complementarians also argue that subordination as a *helper* is not a negative thing. Again, Ortlund contends that the fact that the Old Testament portrays God as our *Helper* proves that helper's role is a glorious one worthy of a perfect and all-powerful God.⁶¹

⁵⁹ Leon J. Wood, *Hosea*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 221.

⁶⁰ Raymond C. Ortlund Jr. "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 104.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 104.

Christ Himself reminded the disciples that He came to serve, not to be served (Matt. 20:28; Mark 10:45). He sought the path of lowly service during His earthly ministry.⁶² There is no better example of this than when Jesus washed His disciples' feet during the Last Supper. Washing feet was the ultimate example of a lowly servant. Jesus calls us to follow His example.⁶³

The Trinity offers further commentary on submission. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are completely equal in holiness and power, but we are told in Scripture that the Son willingly submits to the Father (Heb. 10:7). Before Jesus was arrested and crucified, He prays to the Father, saying, "not My will be done, but yours" after asking His Father to "remove this cup from Me" (Luke 22:42). Both before and after His request to be spared the coming suffering, Jesus subjects Himself to the Father's will, making it clear that His request is less significant than His desire to do the Father's will.⁶⁴ We also know that the Father sent the Son (1 John 4:10) and that Christ sent the Holy Spirit to help believers (John 15:26).

Complementarians point to Jesus' servanthood—both to the human race and to the Father—to support their claim that being a *helper* does not negate equality. Mankind and God are not equals, but throughout history God has stooped down to mankind's level as a helper. Furthermore, submission is not a demeaning term, since even the Son of God submits within the Trinity (Luke 22:42).

⁶² Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 512.

⁶³ Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 621.

⁶⁴ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1758-1759.

In today's society, the terms *helper* and *subordinate* bear negative connotations. In a world of equality and social justice, we as a society have become bogged down, not with making life more equal, but the same. Everything has to be fair. Everyone must have the same advantages and opportunities. To be a helper now implies something less. To be subordinate suggests inequality. There is a natural, social, and cultural resistance to such thinking. We must be careful not to bring this societal baggage into our reasoning of this subject. Scripture must guide us, not our culture's ever-changing worldview.

Formed Out of Man

Genesis 2 explains how both man and woman were formed. It is not difficult to recognize differences in the ways God created them. Man was formed out of the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7), while Eve was fashioned from one of Adam's ribs (Gen. 2:22). The Hebrew word for fashioned or built is used in only two places: this passage and then in Amos 9:6. This verb is used exclusively to describe God's unique, creative activity.⁶⁵

God's creation of woman was not completely distinct since she was created from the material of a preexisting being. This being the case, we must not think that Eve was "preowned" by Adam.⁶⁶ Adam didn't view Eve as being worth anything less than himself when God brought her to him (Gen. 2:22).

Adam and Eve first encountered each other when Adam woke up from his deep sleep. He exclaimed that the woman was bone of his bones and flesh of his flesh (Gen.

⁶⁵ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis*, Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 69.

⁶⁶ Kenneth O. Gangel and Stephen J. Bramer, *Genesis*, Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville: B&H, 2002), 29.

2:23). Adam recognized that Eve was the perfect counterpart for him, unlike any of the animals that God had already made (Gen. 2:20). Complementarian Alexander Strauch believes that the woman's derivation from the man demonstrates both equality in nature but differences in roles.⁶⁷

Gilbert Bilezikian, an egalitarian, argues that since Eve was formed from Adam's side, she is humanity twice refined, and at the very least, then, was equal to Adam in value and role. Bilezikian contends that if Eve had been created from the ground, like Adam and the animals, then Adam would have had no reason to consider Eve his equal.⁶⁸ What would have made Eve different from the animals in Adam's eyes?

On the other hand, Wayne Grudem, a complementarian scholar, argues that equality does not disprove obvious differences. He believes Bilezikian is correct to see Eve's creation out of Adam as a sign of equality but emphasizes that Adam and Eve were clearly different. They were different physically, which no one can argue; but they were also created with distinct roles within their special relationship.⁶⁹ For Grudem, Bilezikian's argument holds little weight.

Other scholars, predominantly within the patriarchal camp, believe that Eve being formed from Adam serves as compelling evidence that men are stronger both physically and mentally. Joseph Exell argues that God created men with a greater ability to lead by equipping them with superior mental strength. Exell points to history to support this controversial view, claiming there have been no female Isaac Newtons. He acknowledges

⁶⁷ Strauch, *Men and Women*, 22.

⁶⁸ Gilbert Bilezikian, *Beyond Sex Roles: What the Bible Says About A Woman's Place in Church and Family* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), 29-30.

⁶⁹ Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth* (Sisters: Multnomah, 2004), 121-122.

there will always be exceptions but remains convinced that this passage shows men to possess greater mental capacities.⁷⁰ Not only is this view extremely counter cultural to American society, but more importantly it lacks evidence within Scripture.

Many complementarians point to Paul's first letter to the Corinthians to support their views. In this letter, Paul explains that the head of a wife is her husband (1 Cor. 11:3) and that woman is the glory of man (1 Cor. 11:7). He then cites the Genesis account, explaining that man was not made from the woman, but that woman was made from the man (1 Cor. 11:8). The New Testament seems to confirm that men possess an inherent leadership role. For instance, Paul reminds Timothy—a young pastor—that men were created first (1 Tim. 2:13). Paul uses Genesis 1-3 as an authoritative fountain for soteriology and his instruction on home and ecclesiastical order.⁷¹ Paul's appeals to the creation account bolster the complementarian position.

The Right to Name

Another aspect of the creation account pertinent to this issue is Adam's authority to name Eve. Adam had named the animals, which many scholars understand as a form of ruling and subduing the earth. Since God brought the animals to Adam for him to name, it can be assumed it was good for him to do so. A similar situation happens after Eve's creation. God creates Eve and brings her to Adam, who then names her. He exclaims: "She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man" (Gen. 2:23).

⁷⁰ Joseph S. Exell, *Genesis*, The Biblical Illustrator (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1967), 187-189.

⁷¹ Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis Vol. 1A*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: B&H, 1996), 219.

We see Adam exercising his right to name the woman before any real interaction has taken place between them. As far as we know, they had not even spoken yet.

Many scholars argue that the language Adam uses is expressive of woman's derivation from man and likeness of man. Complementarians assert that Adam is implying her subordination or subjection to man, as well as man's headship over her by assigning her a name.⁷² Adam named Eve. Eve did not name Adam.

Alvera Mickelsen, a prominent egalitarian, disagrees. She points out that Adam did not name Eve until after sin had entered the world, and even then he identified her as the life source of the human race.⁷³ This is only partly true, however. While it is true that Adam did not give Eve her name until after the Fall, he did name her by class—woman—during their first interaction. In response, Mickelsen believes that in naming Eve *woman*, Adam was simply recognizing her as being distinct from himself; he was not making a claim of authority. She further points out that in much of the Bible it is women who name children, including male children.⁷⁴ While this is true, Mickelsen's opponents argue that if a mother has authority over a child by naming her child, then this would suggest that an individual who names another then also exercises authority over the one being named. Hence the complementarians' notion that Adam had authority over Eve.

⁷² Thomas Whitelaw, *Genesis*, The Pulpit Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1950), 52.

⁷³ Alvera Mickelsen, "An Egalitarian View: There Is Neither Male Nor Female In Christ," in *Women in Ministry: Four Views*, eds. Bonnidell Clouse and Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1989), 185-186.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 185.

God Named the Human Race: Man

In his book *Feminism*, Wayne Grudem highlights how God chose to name the human race, “Man” (Gen. 5:2). Grudem explains, “... it was evident to the original readers that God was using a name that had clear male overtones or nuances.”⁷⁵ God could have chosen to give the human race a gender-neutral name but didn’t. Many complementarians argue that God’s decision to name the human race after Adam supports man’s place of leadership over woman.

Linda Belleville counters, citing many scholars who do not interpret the word *adam* as denoting gender. She claims the word used in Genesis is best connected with *dama* (“earth,” or “reddish-brown soil”) and should be translated in gender neutral fashion, such as *human*.⁷⁶ To this, Grudem reminds readers that throughout the first four chapters of Genesis, the word *adam* is used many times to refer to a male human being, specifically distinct from a female.⁷⁷ Analysis of the creation account suggests that Grudem’s contention that *adam* represents a male human being, rather than female or something gender neutral, is most plausible.

THE FALL

Eden represented God’s best for mankind.⁷⁸ Adam and Eve lived in a form of paradise where they ruled over the earth, just as God commanded (Gen. 1:28). They did

⁷⁵ Grudem, *Feminism*, 33-34.

⁷⁶ Belleville, *Women*, 144.

⁷⁷ Grudem, *Feminism*, 34.

⁷⁸ John J. Davis, *Paradise to Prison: Studies in Genesis* (Salem: Sheffield, 1975), 85.

not have to experience sin or pain, and had a unique relationship with their Creator. Unfortunately, this was only for a short time. Human disobedience complicated the wonderful, free functioning system of life that God created for humans and animals.⁷⁹

Scripture describes the circumstances that led to man's disobedience: The serpent was more crafty than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, "Indeed, has God said, "You shall not eat from any tree of the garden?" (Gen. 3:1) Satan, indwelling a snake, suggests to Eve that she question God's original command. Eventually, Eve, seeing that the fruit was pleasing to the eye, took a bite. After eating of the fruit, she handed the fruit to her husband, Adam, who was with her, and he also ate (Gen. 3:6). At that moment something changed in them. Scripture tells us that their eyes were opened, and suddenly they both knew they were naked (Gen. 3:6). The snake's prediction is fulfilled in a literal sense, but not in a way that Adam and Eve desired.⁸⁰ They experienced shame and guilt instead of going to God, they tried to cover up their disobedience right away.

Eve's Deception

Some scholars have argued that the serpent chose the weaker person to tempt. Others claim that the woman usurped her husband's rightful place by taking leadership, which inevitably led to both of them sinning. Susan Foh, a complementarian, argues that the text does not support these notions.⁸¹ Scripture does not tell us why the serpent chose

⁷⁹ Walton, *Genesis*, 202.

⁸⁰ Wenham, *Genesis*, 76.

to tempt Eve instead of Adam, nor does it say why Eve spoke to the serpent without Adam. However, knowing that the snake was craftier than any other animal God had made (Gen. 3:1), it makes sense that Satan would go after the “easy target.” Strauch takes this position, pointing out that Eve admits to having been deceived (Gen. 3:13).⁸²

Many claim that Adam was standing alongside Eve during this interaction, since she gave some of the fruit to her husband who was *with her*. The motivation behind Eve’s decision to give the fruit to Adam is unknown, as is Adam’s decision to accept it.⁸³ There lacks compelling evidence to prove that he was with her during her interaction with the snake. He was *with her* in the garden and he was *with her* when she gave him the fruit to eat. Is it possible that he was present while Satan deceived her? Of course, but we cannot know for certain. It seems, however, that Adam was not present given that there is no mention of him during their dialogue, nor of him trying to stop her. Would not this have been sin on Adam’s part? Wouldn’t it have been sinful for Adam to use Eve as a guinea pig, or to stand by and do nothing as she bit into the fruit God had commanded them not to eat? Adam didn’t sin until he ate the fruit himself. Thus, it seems likely that Satan purposely confronted Eve at a time when she was most vulnerable—when she was alone.

On the other hand, egalitarians like Bilezikian believe that Satan approached Eve first because she would have provided the strongest resistance. If Satan caused Eve to sin,

⁸¹ Susan T. Foh, “A Male Leadership View: The Head of the Woman Is the Man,” in *Women in Ministry: Four Views*, edss. Bonnidell Clouse and Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1989), 73.

⁸² Strauch, *Equal*, 25.

⁸³ H. L. Ellison, “Genesis,” in *The International Bible Commentary*, ed. F.F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 117.

says Bilezikian, then Adam would easily follow.⁸⁴ Grudem argues that with this line of thinking, Bilezikian wrongly assumes that Satan would automatically attack the strongest person. Grudem and other complementarians point to Scripture passages that describe Satan as prowling around like a lion looking for anyone to devour, not just the strong (1 Pet. 5:8). Jesus was tempted after 40 days of fasting, when He was at His weakest point physically (Matt. 4:2-3). Jesus explains how Satan immediately comes and takes away the Word that is sown in a new believer (Mark 4:15). John, in his Gospel, tells us that Judas was already a thief before Satan entered him at Jesus' betrayal (John 12:6).⁸⁵ There are many examples of weak believers who Satan attacks and deceives. Adam and Eve were equal in value and worth, but it is difficult to believe that Satan went after Eve because she was the stronger of the two, like Bilezikian argues.

Scripture makes it clear. Eve was deceived. Like Adam, she shifts blame to another party: the serpent. But unlike Adam, she can rightfully claim to be the victim of deception.⁸⁶ She believed the snake when he claimed that she would surely not die! (Gen. 3:4) She believed Satan's lies that her eyes would be opened and that she would be like God, knowing good and evil (Gen. 3:5). Eve allowed herself to be deceived and then willfully rebelled against God.

The New Testament reminds us of Eve's deception and disobedience. Paul warns the church at Corinth to not be led astray or deceived like Eve (2 Cor. 11:3). The verb ἐξαπατάω (*exapataō*) means to deceive, to cheat, or to cause someone to accept false

⁸⁴ Bilezikian, *Sex Roles*, 41-43.

⁸⁵ Grudem, *Feminism*, 128.

⁸⁶ Matthews, *Genesis*, 242.

ideas.⁸⁷ The preposition used to compound the Greek verb conveys thoroughness—Eve was thoroughly deceived.⁸⁸ Paul Barnett suggests that the Apostle Paul uses the example of Eve’s interaction with the snake because Satan specifically used his words to deceive her. Paul, then, was warning the Corinthian church to look out for those “preaching another Jesus” (2 Cor. 11:4) and using their words to deceive the church.⁸⁹

Adam’s Sin

Death and sin entered the world through one man: Adam (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:21). Like Eve, Adam committed sin when he openly rebelled against God by eating of the fruit God had commanded him not to eat. Adam’s disobedience was the instrument by which sin and death came into the world.⁹⁰ The consequence of Adam’s sin went much deeper than a few curses, however. Rather, they extended to his offspring and subsequently the entire human race.⁹¹

It wasn’t until Adam ate of the fruit that both his and Eve’s eyes were opened, and they realized they were naked (Gen. 3:7). As they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord, God calls out to Adam, not Eve (Gen. 3:9). Complementarians believe God was

⁸⁷ George H. Guthrie, *2 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2015), 508.

⁸⁸ Robert D. Culver, “A Traditional View,” in *Women in Ministry: Four Views*, eds. Bonnidell Clouse and Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 37.

⁸⁹ Paul Barnett, *The Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 501.

⁹⁰ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 321.

⁹¹ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 230.

addressing Adam as the leader after the fall. God then questions Adam about his sin. God was not asking out of ignorance, but for a higher purpose—to emphasize that Adam had committed the major sin.⁹² Scripture suggests that Adam, not Eve, carried more responsibility for what took place in the garden.

The Penalty

After God confronted both Adam and Eve, He administered curses and consequences for their disobedience. Scholar Gordon Wenham points out that God seems to curse the snake and the ground, but not Adam or Eve.⁹³ First God speaks to the snake and curses it. God then speaks to Eve, saying: “I Will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you.” (Gen. 3:16)

Many evangelical feminists claim that it was this “curse” that subjected men to rule over women. They believe that before the fall, Adam and Eve were completely equal, with neither one possessing authority or headship over the other. It wasn’t until the fall and this pronouncement by God that men began to rule over women.

Egalitarians argue that God intended His curse of Eve to point toward the consequences of sin rather than a structure of creation. Genesis 3, egalitarians say, provides a glimpse into mankind’s post-fall state, showing how the relationship between man and woman was changed due to sin.⁹⁴ Tragically, mankind’s post-fall state has

⁹² H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1960), 158-159.

⁹³ Wenham, *Genesis*, 81.

⁹⁴ Grenz, *Women*, 166.

spurned the mistreatment of women throughout history. It only took six generations from Adam and Eve before men started taking multiple wives (Gen. 4:19). In reading Genesis this way, egalitarians argue that women bear lesser roles in marriage and the church *because* sin corrupted mankind, as seen in Eve's disobedience and its consequence. In this vein, egalitarians argue we should push back against the curse and its consequences—namely, the subordination and mistreatment of women—much like we give medicine to pregnant women to ease their pain. God punished Eve, and by extension all mankind, for her disobedience, but that does not mean we should willfully live into the consequences. God never intended the relationship between man and woman to be broken in this fashion; rather, he was warning Eve of how broken the relationship would become as a result of sin entering the world. Egalitarians reason that we should resist these consequences. John and Nancy Ortberg explain it this way: “One gender holding the power over the other- *and he will rule over you*- was not God’s plan laid out at the beginning of creation. It is clearly here a part of the *curse*- just like pain in childbirth and alienation from labor. And the curse was not a good thing.”⁹⁵

Gilbert Bilezikian goes further, concluding that God enslaved Eve to Adam—and women to men in general—as her punishment, and then enslaved Adam to the soil as his punishment. Bilezikian notes that man was taken from the ground, to which he is now enslaved, and Eve was taken from man, to whom she is now enslaved. Bilezikian further argues that men received the heavier sentence since Adam committed the heavier offense.⁹⁶ However, it is difficult to prove that Adam committed the heavier offense from

⁹⁵ John Ortberg and Nancy Ortberg, “Beyond Gender Stereotypes,” in *How I Changed My Mind About Women In Leadership*, ed. Alan F. Johnson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 180.

Scripture, or that he received a tougher sanction. Additionally, God curses the ground and forces man to work hard for his food, but God does not declare that the ground will rule over Adam. This is in sharp contrast to Eve's situation, in which God does declare that Adam will rule over her. Thus, it is difficult to lay out a compelling case that man is enslaved to the ground. In fact, one could argue nearly the opposite—that man still rules over the ground, but with increased difficulty. Sin entering the world does not necessarily mean that man is unable to fulfill God's command to rule over and subdue the earth (Gen. 1:28). At best, Bilezikian's conclusions are conjecture.

On the other hand, Belleville believes that Eve's desire for her husband had sexual connotations, arguing that man's rule manifests predominantly as sexual demands. Belleville supports her claim by linking the fall to Eve giving birth.⁹⁷ Women, Belleville says, would now allow themselves to be exploited because of their sexual appetite toward their husbands, which may also make them willing to submit to unreasonable male demands.⁹⁸ Although this view bridges the gap between Adam and Eve's sin and the birth of Cain, this view lacks scriptural support.

Complementarians like Grudem would agree with egalitarians that Eve's punishment suggests man's rule over women, which when paired with mankind's sinful nature, often becomes harsh and oppressive.⁹⁹ Such malignant rule was never God's intent; it is a consequence of sin. Complementarians believe that man's God-given role of

⁹⁶ Bilezikian, *Sex Roles*, 54-55.

⁹⁷ Belleville, *Women*, 147.

⁹⁸ Wenham, *Genesis*, 81.

⁹⁹ Grudem, *Feminism*, 109.

leadership still applies, but also that man must never lead in a way that is oppressive (i.e., sinful). In the New Testament, Paul reminds his readers that a husband must lead by loving his wife as he loves himself (Eph. 5:28, 33).

WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

As described in the Old Testament, women played a prominent role in the nation of Israel's history. The Bible records God using women as judges, leaders, and prophetesses. Several times Israel was saved by a woman. Given how God used women in such significant ways, it is crucial that complementarians and egalitarians understand these roles and take them into account when developing stances on women's roles in ministry today. Understanding how God used women in the Old Testament enables a more accurate explanation of the instructions given by New Testament authors, the basis by which we model today's churches.

Eve

Eve, as the first woman, was inherently significant, and we must not overlook how God used her in unique ways to implement His redemptive plan for the human race. The Bible says Eve is the mother of all the living (Gen. 3:20), and her name indicates she was the life-spring, or sustenance, for the propagation of life.¹⁰⁰ Eve also had authority to name her children (Gen. 4:25) and played a key role with Adam in fulfilling God's command to be fruitful and multiply (Gen. 1:28).

¹⁰⁰ John Peter Lange, *Genesis, Commentary on the Holy Scriptures* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1864), 240.

Sarah

Much like Eve, Sarah is described as being the mother of nations (Gen. 17:16). God chose Abraham and Sarah and made them into a great nation; a nation and offspring that produced the Son of Man, who offers salvation to the world (Acts 4:12). The author of Hebrews mentions Sarah's great faith—that through her faith she received the ability to conceive in old age (Heb. 11:11). Many scholars believe Sarah exercised the same faith as Abraham, and that she is the true mother of the faithful (i.e., the church) (Gal. 4:26; 1 Pet. 3:6).¹⁰¹ It is clear that Sarah didn't always live life in accordance with God's promises. She was impatient and offered Hagar to Abraham as a substitute for her, so that Hagar would bear a son to fulfill God's promise (Gen. 16:2). Later, when God reiterates His promise to provide Abraham and Sarah a child, Sarah laughs at God and then immediately denies it (Gen. 18:12-15). Nonetheless, God still used her as the matriarch of all Jews. From this elderly woman came a nation as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as grains of sand on the seashore (Gen. 26:4).¹⁰²

Hagar

Sarah was not the only woman to have a major part in producing a nation. Abraham had his son, Ishmael, through Sarah's Egyptian maidservant, Hagar. God promised to bless Ishmael and multiply his offspring. Ishmael was to become the father

¹⁰¹ Arthur W. Pink, *An Exposition of Hebrews Vol. II* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1954), 708-709.

¹⁰² Thomas D. Lea, *Hebrews & James*, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville: B&H, 1999), 202.

of twelve princes (Gen. 17:20). Even though Ishmael was not the rightful heir, God still blessed him.¹⁰³ God didn't have to make Hagar's offspring into a great nation, especially since He fulfilled His promise to Abraham through Abraham's future son, Isaac. Even so, God chose to bless and make Hagar a matriarch.

Lot's Daughters

Lot's two daughters bore nations as well, though also in unideal circumstances. After sleeping with their father, Lot's daughters gave birth to the Moabites and the Ammonites. God used these two women to create two distinct races, emphasizing the intimate interrelationship between the histories of Abraham and Lot.¹⁰⁴

Rebekah

Rebekah played a crucial role in Israel's narrative. First, it was Rebekah who chose to marry Isaac, not the other way around (Gen. 24:58). She then bore two children, who became the heads of two distinct nations: Edom and Israel. The Lord even spoke directly to her when she was pregnant, foretelling the future relationship between them (Gen. 25:23). As her two sons, Jacob and Esau, grew up, Rebekah loved Jacob more and supported Jacob's successful attempt to steal Esau's blessing from their father, Isaac. Later, once it became evident that Esau and Jacob could not live near one another, Rebekah helped Jacob flee to her relatives in Aram (Gen. 27:42-46).¹⁰⁵ Thus, not only did

¹⁰³ Robert S. Candlish, *Commentary on Genesis*, Classic Commentary Library (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1868), 291.

¹⁰⁴ E.A. Speiser, *Genesis*, The Anchor Bible (Garden City, Doubleday & Company, 1986), 145-146.

God reveal himself to Rebekah, but He used her as a driving force in Israel's unfolding story, helping Jacob take center mantle.

Jacob's Wives

Jacob married Leah and Rachel, the daughters of Rebekah's brother, Laban. Rachel, being barren, gave Jacob her maidservant, Bilhah, as a wife. Likewise, Leah gave Jacob her maidservant, Zilpah. Through these four women, God produced the twelve tribes of Israel (Gen. 35:22-26). Through Leah's line the Messiah was born from whom all are blessed.

Tamar

Tamar was the wife of Judah's son, Er, and then later Onan. In the book of Matthew, Tamar is mentioned in Jesus' ancestral line (Matt. 1:3). The story of Tamar provides a startling example of the unequal relationship between men and women during ancient times. The story begins when Judah refused to give Tamar as a wife to his son, so Tamar took matters into her own hands by disguising herself as a prostitute, whom Judah eventually sleeps with (Gen. 38:15). When Judah heard of Tamar's pregnancy, he became furious and ordered her to be burned (Gen. 38:24). Judah felt this was a just punishment for Tamar's prostitution but ignored the fact that he himself was sleeping with prostitutes. When Judah discovered Tamar is pregnant with his child, he proclaimed, "She is more righteous than I . . ." (Gen. 38:26). Thus, while initially perceived as a

¹⁰⁵ Clarence B. Bass, "Rebekah," in *New International Bible Dictionary*, eds. J. D. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 848.

socially repugnant harlot, in the end Tamar is the heroine.¹⁰⁶ This bizarre story shows not only the sinful nature of man and woman, but also man's unjust treatment of women at that time.

Jochabed

Jochabed, a Levite, was the wife of Amram and the mother of probably the most well-known Old Testament character, Moses.¹⁰⁷ The author of Hebrews mentions Moses' parents as champions of faith for their decision to risk their lives and hide Moses for months despite orders from the Egyptians to have all Hebrew sons killed. Jochabed was not afraid of the king's command, choosing to follow God rather than a king who opposed God. Her faith made her fearless in the face of severe punishment.¹⁰⁸ Not only was Jochabed willing to follow the Lord, but her Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, also defied pharaoh by refusing to kill male Hebrew babies (Exod. 1:17). Jochabed, Shiphrah, and Puah were all brave to do the right thing, and through their courage God would eventually rescue the nation of Israel from Egypt.

¹⁰⁶ Kenneth A. Mathews, *Genesis Vol. 1B*, The New American Commentary (Nashville, B&H, 2005), 709.

¹⁰⁷ Alvin O. Collins, "Jochabed," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, eds. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England (Nashville: Holman, 2003), 928.

¹⁰⁸ Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Hebrews*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 428-429.

Miriam

When she was just a little girl, Miriam helped Jochabed hide Moses (Exod. 2:4).¹⁰⁹ As an adult she became a central character during the Israelites' exodus from Egypt. We know that Miriam was a leader and was considered a prophetess (Exod. 15:20).¹¹⁰ She played a prominent role in leading Israel alongside her brothers, Moses and Aaron. Micah tells us that God specifically sent Miriam to lead, a clear indication that women have the God given ability to lead well (Micah 6:4).

Of course, Miriam's leadership was not perfect. Like the rest of the Israelites, she falls into sin by complaining, and even criticizes Moses for marrying a Cushite woman (Num. 12:1). Her complaint about Moses's foreign wife was only a surface issue concealing jealousy over her brother's unique status before God.¹¹¹ However, Miriam, too, had a unique relationship with God, as she was a prophetess, and the Lord spoke to her as He did to Moses. Both Aaron and Miriam are brought before the Lord on account of their complaining, and Scripture suggests that Miriam took the lead since she is mentioned first.¹¹² Only Miriam is punished—a bout of leprosy from the Lord from which she is healed after seven days of isolation.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ John J. Davis, *Moses and the Gods of Egypt* (Winona Lake: BMH, 1986), 60.

¹¹⁰ Leslie C. Allen, *The Books of Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, and Micah*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 367,

¹¹¹ Timothy R. Ashley, *The Book of Numbers*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 224.

¹¹² Glen S. Martin, *Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers*, Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville: B&H, 2002), 298-299.

¹¹³ Carl E. DeVries, "Miriam," in *New International Bible Dictionary*, eds. J. D. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 662.

Much like the false prophets we read about so often in the Old Testament, there were also false prophetesses. Noadiah was a prophetess who opposed the work and plans of Nehemiah, showing the low spiritual standards of prophets and prophetesses during Nehemiah's day.¹¹⁴ In contrast, Miriam stands as an enduring example of a strong spiritual leader who, despite her sin, sought to serve Israel and God through her special position.

Rahab

The story of Rahab shows us that God can use anyone to achieve His purposes. Rahab may have not been a spiritual leader in her time, but she is forever remembered as an example of great faith (Heb. 11:31). In the book of Joshua, we learn that Rahab protected two Israeli spies, hiding them in her home as the men of Jericho demanded she hand them over (Josh. 2:4). Later that night she went onto the roof where she had hidden the spies and explained all that she knew about the Lord—His work in bringing the Israelites out of Egypt and across the Red Sea, as well as what the Israelites did to two Amorite Kings, Sihon and Og (Josh. 2:10). All this leads her to confess that the Lord, Israel's God, *is the supreme God of the heavens above and the earth below* (Josh. 2:11).¹¹⁵ Commentator Kenneth Gangel explains that this is an amazing statement of faith from a woman who had never tasted manna, had never seen the glory cloud, and had never heard of the Law.¹¹⁶ She believed that God's power was real and was confident that

¹¹⁴ Charles Fensham, *The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 206.

¹¹⁵ Marten H. Woudstra, *The Book of Joshua*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 72.

He would give His people the land.¹¹⁷ This faith was the primary reason she and her family were eventually saved.

The author of Hebrews is not the only New Testament author to mention Rahab. Matthew lists Rahab in his genealogy of Jesus. By including her, Matthew honors Rahab and her incredible demonstration of faith.¹¹⁸

James also uses Rahab as an example of someone whose actions and works serve as proof of true faith (James 2:25). Compared to Abraham, who James also mentions as an example of true faith, Rahab's story is striking. Unlike Abraham, she was a woman, a Canaanite, and a prostitute. Her example is compelling proof that true faith expresses itself in good works.¹¹⁹ Early church fathers, such as Clement, go as far as to consider Rahab a prophetess.¹²⁰ Even though Rahab was a pagan woman, God used her faith to help Israel secure the promised land. Rahab forever stands as an example of faith, one that all Christians should follow.

Deborah

One of the most important woman leaders in the Old Testament that Egalitarians point to is Deborah. Deborah is identified as a prophetess, judge, and leader over Israel.

¹¹⁶ Kenneth O. Gangel, *Joshua*, Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville: B&H, 2002), 31.

¹¹⁷ Gareth Lee Cockerill, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 584.

¹¹⁸ Craig L. Blomberg, *Matthew*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 56.

¹¹⁹ James B. Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 133-134.

¹²⁰ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 318-319.

(Judg. 4:4).¹²¹ Being a prophetess, she would have been the agent through which God communicated to His people.¹²² We see this happen when she summons Barak and gives him the Lord's command to march against Sisera's army (Judg. 4:6).

It is interesting to note that even when Deborah gave Barak the Lord's command, he still didn't want to go. Deborah had to accompany him, but with consequence: the honor of victory would not go to Barak, but to an unknown woman. Sure enough, at the end of the story a woman named Jael kills Sisera, the leader of the King of Hazor's army (Judg. 4:21). Jael, in a sense, becomes the hero of the story due to her courage at the most critical moment.¹²³ This narrative portrays Barak as subservient to Deborah but Deborah's song in the next chapter places them in a complementary relationship.¹²⁴

Scholar Trent Butler reminds us that this kind of situation—one in which women lead and administer authority—would have been unthinkable to the Israelites of that time.¹²⁵ What happened to Barak's leadership? We do not know. However, we do know that this story takes place after a period in which *Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord*, following the death of the previous judge, Ehud (Judg. 4:1). Could the lack of male leadership be a part of the evil that the Lord saw within His people? Possibly. Nonetheless, Deborah rose up as a leader and God used her for His purposes.

¹²¹ Pamela J. Scalise, "Deborah," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, eds. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 408.

¹²² Barry G. Webb, *The Book of Judges*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 183.

¹²³ S. G. Green, *Joshua-Ruth*, The Biblical Illustrator (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1958), 56.

¹²⁴ Daniel I. Bock, *Judges, Ruth*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: B&H, 1999), 183.

¹²⁵ Trent C. Butler, *Judges*, Word Biblical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009), 84-85.

Ruth

Like Rahab, Ruth was not a Jewish woman, yet God used her in a profound way. In the book of Ruth, we find Ruth to be loving, faithful, loyal, and possessing extraordinary courage.¹²⁶ She stays by Naomi's side (Ruth 1:16-17) as they travel back to Israel (Ruth 1:22). With Naomi's encouragement, Ruth eventually marries Boaz and becomes the great grandmother of the future King David (Ruth 4:17). At the beginning of the narrative, both Ruth and Naomi are in a tragic state, but at the end both are singing praises. They even proclaim that Ruth was better for Naomi than seven sons (Ruth 4:15).

This story of two widows takes on a bright new dimension as both become woven into the fabric of Israel's larger national history.¹²⁷ Matthew reminds us that Ruth is also in Christ's genealogical line (Matt. 1:5).¹²⁸ While Ruth did not necessarily serve as a major leader, she is one of many Old Testament women used by God to greatly influence the nation of Israel.

Hannah

Hannah was barren and begged God for a son each year when she went to the Tabernacle to worship. Israelites considered children to be a gift from God (Ps. 127:3)

¹²⁶ Daniel I. Block, "Book of Ruth," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, eds. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England (Nashville: Holman, 2003), 1422-1424.

¹²⁷ Robert L. Hubbard Jr., *The Book of Ruth*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 277.

¹²⁸ David L. Turner, *Matthew*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 59-60.

and because of this, they viewed barrenness as a mark of divine disfavor.¹²⁹ Thus, women who were unable to have children were looked down upon.

After one sacrificial meal at Shiloh, Hannah prayed to God for a son, promising to give him back to the Lord (1 Sam. 1:11). This must have been an extremely difficult promise for Hannah to make—to willfully give up her child born out of her barrenness. She clearly acted on faith.¹³⁰ Eventually she became pregnant and gave birth to a son, naming him Samuel (1 Sam. 1:20). When Samuel was old enough, she gave him to the Lord at Shiloh, as promised (1 Sam. 1:27).

Hannah's situation is very similar to another woman's circumstance during this time, that of Sampson's mother, who was also barren and had no children (Judg. 13:4). An angel of the Lord eventually appeared to her and declared that she would soon conceive and give birth to a son. This son was to be someone special, a Nazarite who would one day deliver Israel from the hands of the Philistines (Judg. 13:5). After the angel left, the woman told her husband, Manoah, everything that had happened. Manoah prayed to the Lord, asking God to explain His plans for their promised son. The Lord did come back, but not to Manoah. Instead, the Lord reappeared to his wife. It is interesting that God appeared to Manoah's wife, for it was Manoah who had prayed for the angel of the Lord to return. Manoah's wife certainly desired for her husband to be involved, for he would help raise the child.¹³¹ Ultimately, Manoah is given the opportunity to speak to the Lord, but only after his wife retrieves him.

¹²⁹ Herbert Wolf, *Judges*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 462.

¹³⁰ David Toshio Tsumura, *The First Book of Samuel*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007), 118.

Both of these examples—Hannah and Sampson’s mother—remind us that God reveals Himself to women as well as men. God looked upon these two barren women with compassion and gave them sons. The children born to these women were not ordinary, but special, both being dedicated to God as Nazarites. Although God used these two sons in different ways, both played large roles in the nation of Israel as judges. Hannah and Sampson’s mother acted on faith, and God rewarded them in mighty ways.

David’s Wives

King David had several wives, but three of them specifically showed wisdom in helping David. Michal was the daughter of King Saul, and she helped David escape her father as he was trying to kill David. She helped him climb out a window and then disguised his bed to make him look sick (1 Sam. 19:11-16). Although she saved his life, things don’t end well for Michal. She later becomes angry at David for dancing shamelessly before all of Israel and then remained childless until her death (2 Sam. 6:23).¹³²

Abigail was another of David’s wives who showed extreme wisdom. As David moved to attack Abigail’s first husband, Nabal, for his insult upon the future king, Abigail intercedes by giving David many gifts. She reasons with him, stating that killing Nabal and his men would be a blemish on his record, one that his conscience would always have to bear. She reminds him of the burden of needless bloodshed (1 Sam.

¹³¹ W. Gary Phillips, *Judges, Ruth*, Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville: B&H, 2004), 208-209.

¹³² Ronald F. Youngblood, *1&2 Samuel*, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 878.

25:31). Because of Abigail's discernment, David chooses not to kill Nabal. Soon after, the Lord repays Nabal for his wickedness and puts him to death and David marries Abigail.

Bathsheba was David's most well-known wife. We are told in 2 Samuel that one day David noticed Bathsheba bathing from the roof of his palace and lusted after her before sleeping and impregnating her. In an attempt to cover up his sin, David had Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, killed in battle. David then took Bathsheba as his wife, but his sin ultimately led to the death of their first child (2 Sam. 11:27). David and Bathsheba had several more children, including the future king, Solomon.

Bathsheba was wise enough to save herself, as well as her son, Solomon, by appearing before King David in his old age (1 Kings 1:12). She made it known to David that another one of his sons had already declared himself as king, posing an immediate threat to her and Solomon, for Solomon was a competing heir to the throne.¹³³ Not only did she secure for Solomon the right to rule as king, she also secured for herself the right to reign with her son.¹³⁴ Solomon had a special throne built just for Bathsheba, and she sat at his right hand (1 Kings 2:19).

All three of David's wives played major roles in establishing the Davidic line that eventually led to Christ. They all showed wisdom, and they all helped David rule over Israel. These women saved David from his family, his enemies, and himself.

¹³³ Gary Inrig, *I&II Kings*, Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville: B&H, 2003), 12.

¹³⁴ Pete Schemm, "Bathsheba," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, eds. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England (Nashville: Holman, 2003), 178.

Esther

Very few Hebrews risked their lives to save God's people like Esther. Esther, a Jewish orphan, became queen of Persia at a young age.¹³⁵ This position ultimately allowed her to intervene for the Jewish people in the face of Persian oppression. Esther's cousin, Mordecai, suggests that God deliberately put Esther in her position as queen to protect her people. He even suggests that there would be divine punishment on her if she chose not to intercede in Haman's plan (Esther 4:14).¹³⁶

Esther does intervene. First, she requests all the Jews living in Susa to spend three days fasting alongside her. This was a religious act and shows her dependence on God for His favor.¹³⁷ Esther chose to fast because the task at hand drove her to a place of dependence, choosing to be more concerned about her spiritual condition than her physical condition. Fasting was designed to lead to purification and a place of humility before the Lord (Ps. 69:10).¹³⁸ She then carries out her plan and successfully advocates for her people, saving much of the Jewish race.

Mordecai was right: God's design was to use Esther to accomplish His will. We must not lose sight of the fact that God specifically chose a young orphaned woman to save His people. Mordecai was likely an official to the king, and there would have been

¹³⁵ Clyde E. Harrington, "Esther," in *New International Bible Dictionary*, eds. J.D. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 326.

¹³⁶ John C. Whitcomb, *Esther: And the Destiny of Israel* (Chicago: Moody, 1979), 78.

¹³⁷ Knute Larson and Kathy Dahlen, *Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther*, Holman Old Testament Commentary (Nashville: B&H, 2005), 320.

¹³⁸ John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, & Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 2000), 488.

other Jewish men working for the king. Yet God decided to use a young, orphaned, Jewish girl to save an entire race.

Other Important Women

There are many examples of other important women throughout the Old Testament. God used women, even widows, to provide for his prophets (1 Kings 17:9). Even after Elijah puts Zarephath to a severe test, asking her to prepare food for him despite her family's dire needs, Zarephath does as Elijah asks, placing her faith in God's provision.¹³⁹ We are reminded of prominent women, such as the Shunammite woman, who allowed the prophets of God to rest at her home (2 Kings 4:8). During this time, and in addition to the prophets, God spoke to prophetesses. King Josiah, for instance, consults the prophetess Huldah when he finds the Book of the Law in the Temple. God then uses Huldah to deliver a message to Josiah (2 Chron. 34:26). Huldah eventually prophesies judgement on the nation of Judah, but a peaceful death for Josiah.¹⁴⁰

John Barton Payne points out that the idea of discrimination based on sex was foreign to people in the Old Testament. He explains that restrictions on women, specifically at the temple, arose only when the perversion of intertestamental Judaism took effect.¹⁴¹

¹³⁹ R. D. Patterson & Hermann J. Austel, *1 & 2 Kings*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 139-140.

¹⁴⁰ Thomas V. Brisco, "Huldah," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, eds. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England (Nashville: Holman, 2003), 790-791.

¹⁴¹ J. Barton Payne, *1 & 2 Chronicles*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 551.

Conclusion on Old Testament Women

God chose to use women throughout the Old Testament, and He did it in a variety of ways. In response to their faith, He used women to create nations that played major roles in world history. Women were brave to stand up to Pharaohs and kings, and because of this, God blessed them immensely. God spoke through prophetesses and used the lowest in society to accomplish His will. Many of these women are included in Jesus's genealogical line. John Barton Payne points out that the idea of discrimination based on sex was foreign to people in the Old Testament. He explains that restrictions on women, specifically at the temple, arose only when the perversion of intertestamental Judaism took effect.¹⁴² Whatever the case may be, it is clear that God values women as much as He does men, and there is no question that women's roles within the nation of Israel were important and prominent. Both egalitarians and complementarians must consider these facts as they formulate their positions on women in church ministry today.

JESUS' EXAMPLE

Jesus is the central character of the New Testament. He was sent by God the Father at the perfect time so that He might redeem us to become His adopted children (Gal. 4:4). Clothed in human nature, Jesus was born of a virgin and lived a perfect life. As He grew, He amazed those around Him, (Luke 2:47) while increasing in their favor (Luke 2:52).

Jesus' ministry began when He was about 30 years old (Luke 3:23) following His baptism by John the Baptist (Matt. 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22) and temptation

¹⁴² J. Barton Payne, *1&2 Chronicles*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 551.

by Satan (Matt. 4:1-11; Mark 1:12-13; Luke 4:1-13). Jesus called His disciples (Matt. 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:1-11; John 1:35-51) and made the city of Capernaum His headquarters. From Capernaum He went out, with His disciples, to challenge the people in surrounding cities and towns to turn back to God.¹⁴³

Christ's example should be everything to us. He is the only perfect human being to have ever walked the Earth. Peter reminds us, as he quotes from the Old Testament book of Isaiah, that Jesus committed no sin nor was deceit ever found in Him (1 Pet. 2:22).¹⁴⁴ He had no spot or blemish (1 Pet. 1:19) and no sin (1 John 3:5; Heb. 4:15). Therefore, we should strive to be imitators of Christ (Eph. 5:1-2). In fact, the test of our relationship with God is whether it reflects the life of Jesus in our daily walk (1 John 2:6).¹⁴⁵ When we give our lives to Christ, we voluntarily take off our old self and, being renewed in the Spirit, put on the new self which is in the likeness of God (Eph. 4:22-24). This renewal is something that takes place inside, transforming believers into the image of Christ.¹⁴⁶ Jesus was both God and man, and He is our ultimate example (1 Pet. 2:11).

¹⁴³ Everett F. Harrison, "Christ, Jesus," in *New International Bible Dictionary*, eds. J.D. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 205.

¹⁴⁴ R. C. H. Lenski, *1-2 Peter, 1-3 John, Jude*, Commentary on the New Testament (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1937), 120.

¹⁴⁵ I. Howard Marshall, *The Epistles of John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 128.

¹⁴⁶ F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 358.

Jesus and Culture

Jesus had a lot to say during His public ministry on earth. Much of Jesus' message caused division throughout the land of Israel (John 10:19-21). Most of the religious leaders of Jesus' day didn't appreciate His message, challenging him and plotting against him from an early point.

After Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist and tempted by Satan, He went back to His hometown, Nazareth. There He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath and read from Isaiah.¹⁴⁷ He closed the book, sat down, and taught His listeners. He explained that the Scriptures He had just read were being fulfilled that very day with His reading (Luke 4:16-22). Everyone in the synagogue was astonished. Though they were surprised, they did not admire or appreciate Jesus' claim.¹⁴⁸ Jesus' claim—that He was the fulfilment of the prophecy in Isaiah—was at odds with the beliefs held by his Jewish contemporaries. A few verses later we read that Jesus' listeners drove Jesus out of the city, leading Him to the brow of the hill with the intent of throwing Him off the cliff (Luke 4:28-30).

At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, He went to Jerusalem for The Passover. While in the city, He visited the temple and drove out the money changers and those selling oxen, sheep, and doves (John 2:13-14). Even though the sale of sacrificial animals and the exchanging of foreign money into the local currency were valuable services for travelers, Jesus pushed back against the cultural norms He deemed sinful.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁷ Isaiah 61, followed by 58:6.

¹⁴⁸ Leon Morris, *Luke*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 117.

¹⁴⁹ Andreas J. Kostenberger, *John*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 105.

Jesus frequently broke the cultural Sabbath laws. The Jews revered keeping the Sabbath as one of Israel's greatest and most distinctive rituals, setting them apart from other nations.¹⁵⁰ John records an instance where the religious leaders become offended because Jesus heals a lame man on the Sabbath (John 5:1-16). In another instance, the religious leaders argue that Jesus cannot be from God because He violated the Sabbath when healing a blind man (John 9:16). In their view, no true prophet would break the Sabbath.¹⁵¹ In another instance, Jesus' disciples were picking the heads of grain on the Sabbath, which upset the religious leaders. Jesus explained that He was Lord of everything, even of the Sabbath (Matt. 12:8, Mark 2:23-28). Soon after this encounter, Jesus went to the temple and healed a man with a withered hand. After Jesus performed this miracle, the Jews conspired to destroy Him (Matt. 12:9-14).

Not only did Jesus break many of the cultural Sabbath laws, but He broke societal norms as well. For example, Jesus spent much of His time with "sinners." For instance, one day Jesus went to a Pharisee's house to eat with him and, while there, a sinful woman came to him and began wetting His feet with her tears and wiping them with her hair while also anointing them with perfume. Watching closely, the Pharisee determined that Jesus must not be a prophet because, if He was, He wouldn't have allowed this sinful woman to touch Him (Luke 7:36-39). Similarly, Luke tells us that tax collectors and sinners were drawn to Jesus. During this time, tax collectors were considered traitors to the native country, as they worked for the oppressive Roman government. These tax

¹⁵⁰ Robert H. Stein, *Mark*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 145.

¹⁵¹ J. Ramsey Michaels, *The Gospel of John*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 551.

collectors not only demand taxes for Rome, but they also demanded excessive profits for themselves at Jewish citizens' expense.¹⁵² As the Pharisees and scribes watched Jesus spend time with these traitors, they despised Jesus, for in their minds a true rabbi would never receive sinners (Luke 15:1-2).

We see the same response when Jesus stays at Zaccheus' house (Luke 19:1-10). Zaccheus wasn't just a tax collector, but a chief tax collector. Likewise, Jesus chose Matthew, another tax collector, to be one of His disciples. Matthew heeded the call, leaving everything to follow Jesus. Later that day, Jesus had dinner at Matthew's house with a host of other tax collectors. Despising what they saw, the Pharisees questioned why Jesus would spend time with traitors and sinners (Matt. 9:9-13). Jesus had a reputation of being a friend of sinners. This was extremely countercultural and detestable to the religious leaders (Matt. 11:19).

Several times in Jesus' ministry, He made Himself out to be God, another reason why the Jews sought to kill Him (John 5:18). Jesus claimed to have existed before Abraham, and He even asserted to be the great I Am. When the Jews heard this they knew exactly who Jesus was claiming to be and immediately picked up stones to kill Him. The Jews rejected the notion that God could become man, let alone lowly servant to die for others. Therefore, Jesus' claim that He was God was highly offensive to the Jews (John 8:48-59). Later, at the Feast of the Dedication in Jerusalem, Jesus explained that He and the Father are one (John 10:29). The Jews who heard this again picked up stones to kill Him, angered that Jesus, a man, would call Himself God (John 10:33). The Jews were

¹⁵² Robert Stewart, "Publican," in *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary*, ed. Chad Brand, Charles Draper, and Archie England (Nashville: Holman, 2003), 1349.

fiercely proud of their religious heritage and were prepared to execute Jesus for making claims what they felt to be blasphemous.¹⁵³ Claiming to be a god was not uncommon within the ancient world. Within Jewish culture, however, claiming equality with the one true God was blasphemous and punishable by death.

At the end of Jesus' ministry, He entered the temple yet again and drove out the money changers and those who were selling animals (Matt. 21:12, Mark 11:15, Luke 19:45). The temple area was the epicenter of Israel's religious culture—a symbol of national identity and pride, especially since the Maccabean revolt of the second century B.C.¹⁵⁴ People traveled from around the world to worship at the temple. Jesus' actions, then, stirred up intense anger among the Jews, and the priests and scribes again sought to destroy Him (Mark 11:18, Luke 19:47).

There are many who argue that Jesus's beliefs and actions reflect the Jewish culture in which He lived. This is simply not the case. We see throughout the Gospels that the Jewish leaders were constantly trying to arrest and kill Jesus. They were not trying to rid themselves of Jesus because He did everything the way their culture dictated. Rather, they plotted to kill Jesus because He was extremely countercultural. He did things and said things that no rabbi should do or say according to their cultural norms.

¹⁵³ D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 395-396.

¹⁵⁴ France, *Matthew*, 783.

Jesus Came as a Man

Many evangelical feminists claim that Jesus' coming in the form of a man was necessary for only practical reasons, such as being better positioned to appeal to a male dominated culture.¹⁵⁵ We see in Scripture, however, that this is not necessarily the case. In fact, society widely embraced female goddesses, such as Artemis, at the time of Christ. Jesus' message and the subsequent spread of Christianity provoked a furious reaction and a call for renewed loyalty to Artemis.¹⁵⁶ The Ephesians felt so strongly about their goddess that they shouted, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians" for about two hours (Acts 19:34). Pilgrims from around the world came to worship her.¹⁵⁷ Jesus coming in the form of a man was not an attempt to align with the particular culture, clearly Jesus was not intimidated by the culture that surrounded Him.

Paul explains that through one man, Adam, sin entered the world (Rom. 5:12), but through another man, Jesus Christ, grace was offered for the justification of mankind (Rom. 5:15-16). All men and women are under the condemnation of God because of the sin of the head man, Adam.¹⁵⁸ Here in Paul's letter to the Roman church, he contrasts the one act of Adam to the one act of Christ, as a man.¹⁵⁹ As discussed earlier, sin didn't enter the human race through Eve's disobedience, even though she ate the fruit first. Sin

¹⁵⁵ Strauch, *Men and Women*, 30.

¹⁵⁶ David G. Peterson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 547.

¹⁵⁷ William Sanford LaSor, "Artemis," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 307.

¹⁵⁸ John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 194.

¹⁵⁹ John MacArthur, *Romans 1-8*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1991), 304.

entered the human race through Adam, for he was the leader and head of mankind. Paul doesn't mention Eve when explaining how sin entered the human race. This is because Eve was under the headship of Adam, and her rebellion demanded less severe consequences. God intended for Adam to rule the world with Eve at his side, but because of his sin both he and all of his descendants were alienated from God. Instead of Adam ruling over the earth, sin and death came to rule over him.¹⁶⁰ This made it essential that Christ became a man. Jesus literally replaced the death brought through Adam with life (1 Cor. 15:22).

Strauch argues that the requirements for Jesus weren't limited to His gender. Christ also had to be born a Jew, as Jesus taught that salvation was from the Jews (John 4:22). He had to be a firstborn son from the genealogical line of both Abraham and David (2 Sam. 7:12-16, Isa. 11:1, Jer. 23:5-6).¹⁶¹ In His original call to Abraham, God promised a messiah through whom all the families of the earth would be blessed (Gen. 12:2-3). This blessing is one of the main themes throughout the Old Testament and played a significant role in his life.¹⁶²

Jesus Referred to God as Father

Jesus' life is the ultimate example and model of how we should live our lives.¹⁶³ Paul reminds us that we are to be imitators of him (Paul), as he is an imitator of Christ (1

¹⁶⁰ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 286.

¹⁶¹ Strauch, *Men and Women*, 31.

¹⁶² John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990), 112.

Cor. 11:1, Eph. 5:1). As we read about Jesus' life in the Gospels, it is important to note that Christ referred to God as His Father. This is the same understanding the Jews had of God during Old Testament period.

Throughout the Old Testament, God chose to reveal Himself with masculine language. Numerous verses speak of God as being a Father (Deut. 1:31, Deut. 32:6, 2 Sam. 7:14, Ps. 89:26, Mal. 1:6, etc.).¹⁶⁴ He is described as being a Father to the fatherless, (Ps. 68:5) a Father who shows compassion to His children (Ps. 103:13), and a Father who disciplines those whom He loves (Prov. 3:11-12). Israel's Lord knows human fallibility, frailty, and finitude and yet He shows the mercy of a loving Father toward His imperfect children.¹⁶⁵ Isaiah cried out, "For you are our Father, though Abraham does not know us, and Israel does not recognize us. You, O Lord, are our Father, Our Redeemer from of old is Your name." (Isa. 63:16) While Abraham and Jacob were biological fathers to the nation of Israel, God was their one true Father. Israel was not to be primarily an ethnic or national entity, but a spiritual one with God as its Father.¹⁶⁶ Isaiah proclaimed, "But now, O Lord, you are our Father; we are the clay, and You are our potter; and all of us are the work of Your hand" (Isa. 64:8).

Jesus confirmed Old Testament theology and teaching about God the Father. The number of instances of the word "Father" being applied to God in the Gospels is more

¹⁶³ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 498-499.

¹⁶⁴ Norman Geisler, *Systematic Theology Vol. 2* (Bloomington: Bethany House, 2003), 279.

¹⁶⁵ Nancy deClausse-Walford, Rolf A. Jacobson, and Beth LaNeel Tanner, *The Book of Psalms*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 765-766.

¹⁶⁶ John N Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 612.

than double the number found in the rest of the New Testament. It occurs 111 times in the Gospel of John alone.¹⁶⁷ In John 10, Jesus has an interaction with the Jews where He claims that He and the Father are one (John 10:30). Later, in John 14, we see the disciples asking Jesus to show them the Father. Jesus explains that anyone who has seen Him has seen the Father, and that the Father is in Him (John 14:8-13). Later, when speaking to a crowd, Jesus explains that we have one true Father in heaven to whom we owe our life (Matt. 23:9).¹⁶⁸ Jesus knew the Father and had a perfect relationship with Him.¹⁶⁹

When Jesus prayed, we find that He referred to God as Father. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus fell to the ground and prayed, “Abba! Father!” (Matt. 26:39, 42; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42) The term “Abba” was a common household term frequently used by children addressing their father.¹⁷⁰ Not only did Jesus refer to God as Father, but He even taught His disciples to address God as Father. When Jesus taught His followers to pray, He began by addressing God as a father (Matt. 6:9-13; Luke 11:2-4). The opening word “Father” indicates the attitude in which prayer should be offered up to God, with Him being our divine Father (Luke: 10:21-22).¹⁷¹

Why didn’t God choose to describe Himself in feminine terms? God could have expressed Himself as a mother if He wanted, but He chose not to. Why did God choose to

¹⁶⁷ William J. Cameron, “God as Father,” in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 439-440.

¹⁶⁸ John Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 927-928.

¹⁶⁹ Benjamin B. Warfield, *Biblical Doctrines* (Carlisle: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1988), 149.

¹⁷⁰ D. Edmond Hiebert, *The Gospel of Mark: An Expositional Commentary* (Greenville: Bob Jones, 1994), 416.

¹⁷¹ Norval Geldenhuys, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 319.

present Himself only in the masculine? From the beginning, God created Adam to lead as a loving husband and father. Just as Adam was the leader of his family and Jesus is the leader of the church (Col. 1:18), God as a Father is the ultimate leader of His people.

Jesus Appointed Men as Leaders in the Church

Christ had a prime opportunity to allow women to take the mantle of leadership during His ministry on Earth. Wayne House puts it best: “If indeed the Lord broke down pseudo-spiritual “fences” the rabbinic teachers had built around valid points of the Law, and if He did so in order to illustrate spiritual truth as well as correct understanding of Himself, He had a prime opportunity to break a social convention and teach the higher law of female leadership in His new order.”¹⁷² Jesus chose not to call women to be His apostles. Why would He exclude women from this role? Was Jesus biased? Absolutely not. Jesus crossed many social barriers to recognize the value and worth of all women while still reserving the most prominent leadership positions for men.

It may be that Jesus chose to call only men as apostles—the most primary role of leadership during Jesus’ ministry and in the early church—because that was how God designed leadership at creation. Many egalitarians and evangelical feminists disagree with this assessment. They contend that Jesus was trying to stay true to the current Jewish culture, which we have already discussed is not the case. Others argue that women were uneducated, so no one would have accepted them as public leaders. However, as Doriani points out, the disciples were not highly educated either (Acts 4:13).¹⁷³ Several of them

¹⁷² House, *Role of Women*, 83.

¹⁷³ Doriani, *Women*, 48.

were fishermen, suggesting they had little education, little spiritual perception, and almost no religious training.¹⁷⁴ Still, some egalitarians and evangelical feminists deny that Jesus' choosing of all male disciples set a precedent. They argue that if gender is normative, then so is ethnicity. If this were so, then only *Jewish* men should be able to lead the church. This argument, however, is grounded upon an inadequate analogy, for it assumes that Jesus' decision to choose men can be equated to His decision to choose Jews.¹⁷⁵ Yet Paul reminds us that salvation came first to the Jews, then to gentiles (Rom. 1:16). Thus, it makes sense that Jesus chose Jewish leaders to bring salvation to Israel first.

Bilezikian provides a helpful perspective, seeing Jesus' twelve disciples as a pioneer task force purposed in initiating the gospel mission. Women were also part of Jesus' ministry, just not the designated driving force.¹⁷⁶ We see in Mark that many women followed Jesus and took care of Him (Mark 15:41). These women had done what Mark defines as discipleship throughout his Gospel: following and serving Jesus.¹⁷⁷ Yet the fact remains that Jesus chose men as His first twelve disciples (Luke 6:12-16). These men were chosen to be the main leaders of the church—as apostles—after His ascension. Jesus explained their job and mission during His last conversation with them. Worth

¹⁷⁴ John MacArthur, *Mathew 1-7*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 117.

¹⁷⁵ Doriani, *Women*, 49.

¹⁷⁶ Bilezikian, *Sex Roles*, 92-94.

¹⁷⁷ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Mark*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 486.

noting is that Jesus chose to speak to only the eleven apostles before His ascension (Acts 1:2-4; Acts 1:9).

Later, when replacing one of the twelve, Judas Iscariot, the disciples put together a list of requirements for a new apostle, one of those being that the new apostle must be a man. They only considered men who had witnessed Jesus' entire ministry, from His baptism to the ascension.¹⁷⁸ After drawing lots, Matthias was chosen (Acts 1:21-16).

Later, a similar situation happens in the early church when the Hellenistic Jews complained that their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food (Acts 6:1-3). The twelve apostles instructed the brethren to select seven men of good reputation and full of the Spirit and wisdom to put in charge of this task. Both Jesus and the apostles practiced role distinctions between men and women.

Jesus Cared for Women

There are many examples of Jesus caring for women. The New Testament makes it clear that Jesus valued and cared for women as much as He valued and cared for men. Jesus interacted with a wide variety of women. Some followed Him while others begged Him for healing. Jesus referred to some women as great examples of faith, other times He taught in parables using women as main characters. Interestingly, Jesus' first miracle was prompted by His mother asking Him to fix a problem, even though His hour had not yet come (John 2:1-11). Jesus viewed women as being completely equal to men in dignity and value.

¹⁷⁸ John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 93.

One of the clearest examples of Jesus' care for women occurs when the scribes and Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery before Jesus (John 8:1-11). During the subsequent confrontation, Jesus exposed society's double standard of gender discrimination, opposing the hypocritical and cruel behavior of the scribes and Pharisees.¹⁷⁹ The Pharisees were eager to trap Jesus and find grounds on which to accuse Him, so they asked Jesus if they should stone her, as the Law of Moses permitted. His answer stunned them: "He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Jesus was pointing out the double standard, forcing the male witnesses to consider their own sin and hypocrisy.¹⁸⁰ Nonetheless, all the men walked away, leaving Jesus with the sinful woman. Interestingly, Jesus did not contradict the report of her sin, but He chose to not condemn her and instead encouraged her repent and believe.¹⁸¹

Another example of Jesus' radical care for women is His conversation with a Samaritan woman (John 4:7-29). This situation was extremely countercultural, for Jews during this time avoided all social contact with both Samaritans and women in public. Jewish men didn't even talk to their wives in public.¹⁸² Furthermore, the Samaritan woman came to the well at an unusual time of day, suggesting she was an outcast among her own people.¹⁸³ Amazingly, Jesus initiated conversation with her. The woman was

¹⁷⁹ W. David Hager, *As Jesus Cared for Women: Restoring Women Then and Now* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 19.

¹⁸⁰ Gary M. Burge, *John*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 243.

¹⁸¹ Frederick Louis Godet, *Commentary on the Gospel of John Vol. II* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1969), 89.

¹⁸² Beauford H. Bryant and Mark S. Krause, *John*, The College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin: College Press, 1998), 116.

¹⁸³ F.F. Bruce, *The Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983), 102.

shocked—understandably so—and at the end of their conversation Jesus revealed Himself as the Messiah. The Samaritan woman ran into town and told the people about her encounter with Jesus. The disciples stood amazed that Jesus had spoken to a Samaritan woman. But she mattered to Him; a profound example of the mercy, grace, and love that Jesus showed to people, even the unlikeliest of women.

Jesus Healed Women

Early in Jesus' ministry He healed Peter's mother-in-law (Matt. 8:14-15, Mark 1:30-31, Luke 4:38-39). Not long after, Jairus, one of the synagogue leaders, came and begged Jesus to heal his little daughter. As Jesus followed Jairus, a woman suffering from bleeding for twelve years came up behind Him and touched His clothing. After touching His clothing, she was completely healed from her affliction. At once, Jesus realizing that power had gone out from Him, turned around to look for the woman. When she admitted what she had done, Jesus replied, "Daughter, your faith has saved you. Go in peace and be healed from your affliction" (Mark 5:34). These are the words of a loving and caring father. Jesus valued this woman and recognized her faith.

While this conversation unfolded, some people came from Jairus' house to inform him that his daughter was dead. Jesus encouraged Jairus to have faith and followed him to his house anyway. When they got to the house, the crowd that was gathered there laughed at Jesus when he said the girl was not dead. Jesus then went to the child and said, "Little girl, I say to you, get up" (Mark 5:36-43). Matthew records that He took the little girl by the hand (Matt. 9:25). Jesus cared so much for the little girl that He went out of His way to raise her from the dead. He spoke to her with the tenderness of a father.

Other accounts of Jesus healing women include Mary Magdalene, of whom Jesus cast out seven demons (Mark 16:9; Luke 8:2). He also healed a woman who had been disabled by a spirit for over eighteen years. She was bent over and couldn't straighten up. After He made her well, the leader of the synagogue (where the healing took place) reprimanded Jesus because the healing violated the Sabbath. Jesus then described this woman's worth to the synagogue leaders and the crowd: "And this woman, a daughter of Abraham as she is, whom Satan has bound for eighteen long years, should she not have been released from this bond on the Sabbath day?" (Luke 13:10-16) Jesus loved and valued this woman.

Jesus also valued Gentile women. As He was traveling to the region of Tyre and Sidon, a Canaanite woman begged Him to heal her daughter of demon possession (Mark 7:24-30). After Jesus challenged her request, she answered humbly, prompting Jesus to say, "O woman, your faith is great; it shall be done for you as you wish." Matthew tells us that her daughter was healed at once (Matt. 15:28). We even see Jesus' compassion for a poor widow mourning at the funeral of her son. Jesus raised her son back to life (Luke 7:12-15). Christ did not show favoritism towards any one gender—he loved and healed men and women alike.

Jesus Referenced Women Often

Jesus had a lot to say. He taught in a way that no one had ever heard before (Luke 4:22). He taught with authority, power, and wisdom. He also referenced women in His teachings (Matt. 13:54, Mark 6:2), whether by using examples of women in the Old Testament, or by making observations of contemporary women.

On one occasion, Jesus reminded the Jews about the widow of Zarephath. God could have sent Elijah to anyone in the land of Israel, but he specifically chose the widow at Zarephath (Luke 4:25-26). This widow was most likely not even a Jew, given that she lived in Phoenicia, the homeland of Jezabel's and an epicenter of Baal worship.¹⁸⁴ Being a woman and a widow, she would have been among the poorest in society (1 Kings 17:12), but God still chose to use this foreign woman.¹⁸⁵

He also spoke about the Queen of Sheba, who came to hear the wisdom of Solomon hundreds of years prior (1 Kings 10:1-2). His contrast of the "Queen of the South" with Jonah is an example of His teaching method of combining male and female responses to the gospel (Luke 11:31). Jesus places emphasis on analogous gender responses as an example of the way the new covenant completes the old, with the true image of God consisting of both men and women.¹⁸⁶ In fact, Jesus takes His point a step further by claiming that the Queen of the South will rise up and condemn them, both as a foreigner and as a woman.

Jesus didn't just reference women from the Old Testament, He also taught His followers and disciples by using examples of women in their midst. For example, one day as Jesus and His followers were in the temple, He sat down opposite the treasury and observed how the people were giving of their money. Eventually, a poor widow came and deposited two small copper coins. Upon seeing this, Jesus called His disciples over to

¹⁸⁴ Paul R. House, *1, 2 Kings*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman, 2003), 214-215.

¹⁸⁵ Simon J. DeVries, *1 Kings*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2003), 217.

¹⁸⁶ James R. Edwards, *The Gospel According to Luke*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 230.

Him and praised the woman for giving all the money she had to live on, in contrast to the rich who gave to God out of their surplus (Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4). Unlike the religious leaders, this poor widow had a pure heart. She gave God everything she had and stands as an example for us to follow today.

Parables were one of the main methods Jesus used when speaking to the masses (Matt. 13:34-35).¹⁸⁷ He talked about women baking bread (Matt. 13:33), women waiting for their bridegroom (Matt. 25:1-13), and women being persistent when asking for justice (Luke 18:1-8). One of the most well-known parables regarding a woman is the parable of the lost coin. Jesus tells a story of a woman who loses a coin and searches the house carefully until she finds it. When she finally finds the coin, she rejoices in the same way the angels of God rejoice when one sinner repents (Luke 15:8-10). What an awesome position Jesus puts this woman in! Her character in the story is in the likeness of angels. Some scholars also point out the women's emphatic efforts as she attempts to find her coin, suggesting it might reflect the initiative God takes to save lost people.¹⁸⁸

Another way Jesus was countercultural in the Jewish culture of His time was that He taught in ways that elevated women. For example, when teaching on personal relationships in the Sermon on the Mount, He acknowledged the sixth commandment given to the Israelites by God through Moses: "You shall not commit adultery" (Exod. 20:14, Deut. 5:18). This was an outward act that was highly condemned by the religious leaders of that day, but Jesus raised the standard on sexual sin by clarifying that any man

¹⁸⁷ Howard Z. Cleveland, "Parables," in *New International Bible Dictionary*, eds. J.D. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 750.

¹⁸⁸ Joel B. Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 576.

who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery in his heart (Matt. 5:27-29).¹⁸⁹ Thus, Jesus broke the moral superficialities of Jewish men, warning his listeners against man's inclination to seduce and take advantage of women.¹⁹⁰

Similarly, Jesus' teaching on divorce broke cultural norms and elevated women (Mark 10:2-12). In Jewish culture, a husband was allowed to divorce his wife if she sinned against him. The school of Shammai taught that a man should not divorce his wife unless he found in her a matter of indecency, while the school of Hillel said that even if she spoiled his dish, he could divorce her (Mishnah Gittin 9:10).¹⁹¹ Adherents to the Shammai and Hillel codes disputed how best to interpret Deuteronomy 24:1-4, and about what constituted permissible grounds for divorce.¹⁹² Both views, however, focused on a husband wanting to divorce his wife. Jesus, however flipped the script, teaching that a man shouldn't divorce his wife for any reason apart from infidelity (Matt. 5:32). Jesus further explained that, were a couple to divorce for any lesser reason, then the husband would be committing adultery. Once again, Jesus elevated women in a male dominated world.

¹⁸⁹ William Hendriksen, *Matthew*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1973), 302.

¹⁹⁰ Werner Neuer, *Man & Woman: In Christian Perspective* (Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), 95.

¹⁹¹ William A. Heth, "Remarriage for Adultery or Desertion," in *Remarriage After Divorce In Today's Church: 3 Views*, ed. Paul E. Engle and Mark L. Strauss (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2006), 69.

¹⁹² David J. Atkinson, "Divorce," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 346.

Women Followed Jesus

As noted before, we have reason to believe that women were present during Jesus' public ministry from the start. Jesus spent much time teaching the crowds and the women listening responded in a variety of ways (Luke 11:27). During the feeding of the 5,000, we see that there were numbered around 5,000 men, but there were also women and children present (Matt. 14:21). Matthew records for us a similar statistic when Jesus fed the 4,000. This number counted only men, but Matthew states that there were women and children present for this miracle as well (Matt. 15:38).

Women followed Jesus. As Jesus traveled from village to village, women ministered to Him and even supported Him financially. These women included Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, as well as many others (Luke 8:1-3). The fact that these women are mentioned along with the Twelve suggests they were of equal value and worth to Jesus.¹⁹³ Women were also present at Jesus' crucifixion. Mark mentions that these were the same women who followed Him and ministered to Him as before. He also notes that there were many other women who came up with Jesus to Jerusalem (Mark 15:40-41).

Mary and Martha are some of the most well-known followers of Christ. We see them show up in Jesus' ministry multiple times. As Jesus and His disciples were traveling, Martha welcomed Him into her home (Luke 10:38-42). When Jesus began to teach, Martha's sister, Mary, sat at His feet listening, while Martha was distracted with preparations. Martha used her gift of hospitality to serve others, and when she had the

¹⁹³ I. Howard Marshall, *Commentary on Luke*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978), 316.

opportunity to serve Jesus, she wanted to shine.¹⁹⁴ Martha, however, gets so fed up with Mary not helping that she asks Jesus if He even cares that Mary has left her all alone with the work. Jesus' answer to Martha confirms that Mary had actually chosen the better way to spend her time. This story shows us two things: one, Jesus cared for both Mary and Martha; and two, He encouraged and expected women to listen to and follow His teaching. Ryken explains:

Mary's posture seems all the more remarkable when we remember that in those days women were not exactly encouraged to become theologians. Somehow people had the idea that theology was mainly for men, but not for women, as if it were some kind of gender-specific specialty rather than what it actually is: the knowledge of God that everyone needs. Some rabbis permitted women to study the Torah, but forbade them to sit at their feet for formal instruction. Jesus not only permitted it; He positively encouraged it.¹⁹⁵

Jesus cared deeply for both Mary and Martha and wanted them to learn from Him (John 11:5). Later on in Jesus' ministry, we see that both Mary and Martha have a correct understanding of who Jesus is (John 11:20-32). Jesus' teaching, then, was not just for men and religious leaders, but for all—including women.

From Scripture we know that at least two different women anointed Jesus with perfume. Luke reports that as Jesus was reclining at the table of Simon's house, a sinful woman came with an alabaster vial of perfume and began to anoint Jesus' feet with the perfume and her tears (Luke 7:37-38). Jesus allowed this sinful woman to touch him, which was generally forbidden, as He was considered a religious teacher and rabbi.

¹⁹⁴ Philip Graham Ryken, *Luke Vol. I*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2009), 554.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 555.

Simon, a religious leader and Pharisee, didn't view this as proper and looked down upon the woman because of her past sin. Jesus, however, prefers to see how love and forgiveness might change her heart. He points out to those present how this woman cared for Him in a way His other, including his host, hadn't (Luke 7:44-46).¹⁹⁶

Mary, sister of Lazarus and Martha, also anointed Jesus' feet in Bethany (Matt. 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8). She took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard and anointed His feet, while wiping them with her hair. Again, this act draws a negative reaction from some of the onlookers, specifically Judas Iscariot. Judas questions her actions by asking, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor people?" (John 12:5) Three hundred denarii was roughly equivalent to a year's wages. The perfume was so expensive because it was imported from northern India.¹⁹⁷ Mary's willingness to use up such an expensive possession shows how much she was willing to sacrifice for Jesus. In response, Jesus says to her, "Truly I say to you, wherever the Gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be spoken of in memory of her" (Matt. 26:13, Mark 14:9).

Jesus referred to His male and female disciples as His brothers, sisters, and mothers (Matt. 12:49-50). He was emphasizing the inclusivity of the household of God—that the truest spiritual relationship is with Jesus, for both men and women.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶ Darrell L. Bock, *Luke*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 219.

¹⁹⁷ Kostenberger, *John*, 362-363.

¹⁹⁸ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Mathew's Gospel*, Commentary on the New Testament (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1943), 505-506.

Women played vital roles in Jesus' life.¹⁹⁹ Even after Jesus' death, the first witnesses were women (Mark 16:9). These women saw Him die, they saw Him buried, and they saw the very same tomb empty.²⁰⁰ Jesus healed and taught about women, and women played key roles in Jesus' ministry. Their race, circumstances, social status, wealth, or physical sickness did not matter. Jesus loved and ministered to any man or woman who was willing to come to Him.

APOSTLES' VIEWS ON GENDER ROLES

When examining gender roles from a biblical perspective, it is crucial to study what the apostles had to say on this issue. The apostles were God's special messengers in the early church.²⁰¹ They recorded history and wrote letters—writings which eventually came together as the New Testament—and in their works they cover many topics, including men's and women's roles in the church. In Acts, for instance, Luke provides a brief history of the church's origins, including specific accounts of women serving in the church. Peter and Paul, in their letters to various church bodies, teach about the specific roles men and women ought to play in family and church life.

¹⁹⁹ Doriani, *Women*, 42.

²⁰⁰ R. T. France, *The Gospel of Mark*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 661.

²⁰¹ Paul K. Moser, "Apostle," in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 78.

Luke's Account

Starting with Jesus' ascension, Luke's narrative portrays the life and growth of the church under Peter's leadership until the martyrdom of Stephen. From there, the account broadens, as Luke shows the early church's mission to reach both Jews and gentiles.²⁰² Luke shows how specific individuals, filled with the Spirit, contributed to the early church's dynamism. Within his narrative, Luke highlights several women who played important roles in the early church. From the beginning, then, we see that women were integral to church community, including Mary, the mother of Jesus (Acts 1:14).

Pentecost might be the single most important event within the church age. Luke records that on the day of Pentecost, the church was gathered together in one place. Suddenly, there was a loud noise and tongues of fire fell upon each person, filling them with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4). This would have included any women present. Then, as the Spirit gave utterance, the whole assembly began to speak in different tongues, prompting Peter to preach to the crowd (Acts 2:14-36). In his sermon, Peter quotes an Old Testament prophet named Joel, who long before prophesied that the Holy Spirit would be poured out on all mankind (Joel 2:28-29). Peter understood the remarkable linguistic phenomenon occurring among those gathered—both men and women—as the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy.²⁰³ Scholar Duane Garrett explains that a major characteristic of the outpouring of the Spirit is its universality,²⁰⁴ Joel foretold that both

²⁰² Christopher R. Matthews, "Acts of the Apostles," in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 15.

²⁰³ James L. Crenshaw, *Joel*, The Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 171.

²⁰⁴ Duane A. Garrett, *Hosea, Joel*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman, 1997), 369.

sons and daughters would prophesy and that God would pour out His Spirit on male and female servants. The stories of Acts show how this universality played out within the church, with the early Christians coming to realize that God pours out His Spirit on men and women, Jews and Gentiles (Acts 10:44-45). The free gift of receiving the Holy Spirit, through believing in Christ, was not reserved for only Jewish men, but for all.

Later in Acts, Luke tells the story of Peter raising a woman named Tabitha from the dead. Tabitha was part of the church in Joppa and had a reputation for deeds of kindness and charity. She was a benefactor, which guaranteed her special status in the local church; some scholars suggest that she also held a formal rank within the church.²⁰⁵

In Acts 12, after Peter escapes from prison, he immediately goes to the house of Mary, the mother of Mark, where many were gathered and praying (Acts 12:12-16). It is likely that Mary had a relatively large and expensive house, given that many people could gather there, and also because Luke states that upon arriving Peter knocked on the entrance gate—most houses at this time didn't have gates.²⁰⁶ Mary, then, played a vital role within the Jerusalem church, hosting church gatherings and fellowship. Luke also mentioned a servant-girl, Rhoda, was also part of the church (Acts 12:13).

Likewise, when Paul and Silas are released from a Philippian prison, they immediately visit the home of a woman named Lydia and stay there (Acts 16:40). One Sabbath day, Paul and Silas sit down with a group of women and teach them. At least one of these women, Lydia, responded to Paul. Soon after, we are told that she and her

²⁰⁵ Craig S. Keener, *Acts: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 1716.

²⁰⁶ F.F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 238.

household were baptized (Acts 16:13-15). As far as we know, Lydia was the first person in Europe to respond to the gospel. Being a seller of purple fabrics, she probably belonged to the wealthy merchant class, since purple dye was extremely expensive and only worn by emperors and wealthy citizens.²⁰⁷ Lydia marks another instance, then, of a gentile woman serving the apostles with her faith and wealth.

In Thessalonica, Paul reasoned with Jewish leaders in the synagogue for three sabbaths. Luke writes that some men were persuaded, along with a large number of God-fearing Greeks and some leading women (Acts 17:4). Likewise, in Athens, a woman named Damaris, among others, becomes a believer (Acts 17:34).

Priscilla has become a central focus in arguments put forth by partial egalitarians, full egalitarians, and evangelical feminists. Many point to the fact that Priscilla and Aquila, a married couple, took a man named Apollos aside when they heard him teaching, for Apollos only knew of the baptism of John (Acts 18:24-26). They argue that Priscilla must have been the leader since she is mentioned before Aquila four out of the six instances they are mentioned in the New Testament. Even if this hypothesis is true, it doesn't contradict Paul's later statements on women within church assembly, since in this case Priscilla and Aquila interacted with Apollos outside of the church. Both Aquila and Priscilla are great examples, as they were co-laborers with Paul (Rom. 16:3) and used their home for church meetings (1 Cor. 16:19).

Philip the evangelist's four daughters serve as another example of women doing ministry in the early church. Philip's daughters were prophetesses, which may indicate they simply had the spiritual gift of prophecy (Eph. 4:11), but it could also be a means of

²⁰⁷ Simon J. Kistemaker, *Acts*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 590.

identifying them among the first century readers.²⁰⁸ For instance, they may have joined Agabus in prophesying Paul's difficult future.²⁰⁹ Many egalitarians and evangelical feminists have argued such, citing this possibility as proof that women should lead and teach in all churches. Complementarians, on the other hand, push back, pointing out that Luke does not connect Philip's daughters' prophecies with leadership or teaching. It would be difficult to claim that Agabus, also a prophet, was teaching, for there seems to be a clear distinction between teaching and prophesying (Eph. 4:11).

Luke documents many women who come to Christ and played vital roles within the early church. It is clear that God chooses to use women in many of the same ways He chooses to use men when it comes to ministry. Like men, women received the Holy Spirit, spoke in tongues, prophesied, hosted church meetings within their home, and were known for their great reputations.

Peter and Gender Roles

Peter wrote his first letter to Christian Jews, who were targets of heavy persecution.²¹⁰ He wanted to encourage and strengthen believers to stand fast while enduring suffering and distress, but also to instruct them on how to live righteous and godly lives.²¹¹ One issue Peter addressed was gender roles within the home.

²⁰⁸ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The Acts of the Apostles*, Sacra Pagina Series (Collegeville: Liturgical, 1992), 370.

²⁰⁹ R. Kent Hughes, *Acts: The Church Afire*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton: Crossway, 1996), 287.

²¹⁰ Alexander Nisbet, *1 & 2 Peter*, The Geneva Series of Commentaries (Carlisle: Banner of Truth, 1982), 3.

Just as Peter instructed that slaves should submit themselves to their masters with all respect (1 Pet. 2:18), he exhorted Christian wives in the same manner.²¹² Peter teaches wives to submit to their husbands, adorned a gentle and quiet spirit as opposed to external appearances, such as braided hair, gold jewelry, or fancy clothing (1 Pet. 3:1-7).

At first glance, Peter's instructions may sound chauvinistic or degrading since the passage lacks symmetry—six parts of his instruction are aimed at women, while just one part is focused on men.²¹³ Peter explains, however, that a submissive heart will earn a great reputation among the community, honor God, and may win over an unbelieving husband. From a human standpoint, this instruction seems backward, but in God's sight it is wonderfully extravagant.²¹⁴

Along with this instruction, Peter provides women two examples to follow: first, the holy women of former times; second, and more specifically, Sarah. The holy women of former times harkens back to prominent figures in the Old Testament, such as Jochabed, Zipporah, and Abigail. Next, Peter reasons that Sarah was considered a holy woman, for she was submissive to Abraham with steadfast obedience (Gen. 18:19). Believing women, then, ought to be like Sarah, replicating the way she lived her life. Submission to one's husband should actually free a wife from fear. As wives trust in

²¹¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: B&H, 2003), 45.

²¹² Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 202-203.

²¹³ Daniel M. Doriani, *1 Peter*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2014), 108-109.

²¹⁴ J. Ramsey Michaels, *1 Peter*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word, 1988), 163.

God, they will not be fear anything their husbands—whether believing or unbelieving—might do to them, for they know that God is in control.²¹⁵

As a last word on this subject, Peter addresses husbands. He commands husbands to love with their wives in an understanding way, show them honor as fellow heirs of grace. Peter warns that if a husband fails to love his wife in this way—with love, kindness, consideration, and courtesy—then he grieves the Holy Spirit and risks having his prayers hindered (1 Pet. 3:7).²¹⁶ The Lord does not bless those who abuse positions of authority by mistreating those under them.²¹⁷ God cares about wives just as much as husbands. Peter’s use of the term “weaker vessel” for wives has caused controversy. Scholar Karen Jobes explains that this term, as Peter uses it, is best understood as relating to physical strength. Peter, then, is emphasizing that some men were using their authority to run roughshod over their wives, who were physically weaker and with less social empowerment. These men, says Peter, will not be heard by God.²¹⁸

Both husbands and wives have a duty to respect one-another and to live together in an understanding way. Peter instructs men to lead their homes and families in a righteous way, while women are to be submissive to their husbands, a precious act in God’s sight. Wives need to allow their husbands to lead, knowing that God values

²¹⁵ I. Howard Marshall, *1 Peter*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1991), 103.

²¹⁶ John Phillips, *Exploring The Epistles of Peter*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2005), 143,

²¹⁷ Schreiner, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 161.

²¹⁸ Jobes, *1 Peter*, 209.

submissiveness. Husbands and wives are complete equals but play different roles within the family, where men take the lead. Paul instructs the church to do the same.

Paul and Gender Roles

The Apostle Paul had much to say on gender roles. In fact, some evangelical feminists argue that Paul was sexist and didn't regard women as equals. Many of these evangelical feminists claim that Paul's writings on gender roles should be dismissed, arguing that Paul was just a product of his culture. This couldn't be further from the truth. Like Jesus, Paul cared deeply for women, valuing them as equals. Throughout his letters, Paul praises women who shared in the work of ministry.

Paul commends his sister in Christ, Phoebe, to the church in Rome. She is undoubtedly the one Paul entrusted to carry his letter to the church, and he asks the Roman church to welcome her in a manner befitting her worthiness as a believer (Rom. 16:1-2).²¹⁹ Paul also commands the Romans to greet Prisca and Aquila, who risked their own lives for his life, and who Paul describes as his fellow workers (Rom. 16:3-5). Mary, too, was to be welcomed as one who worked hard for the church (Rom. 16:6), while Junias was Paul's fellow prisoner who stood out among the apostles (Rom. 16:7). Tryphosa, Rufus' mother, Julia, and Nereus' sister are also mentioned as being near and dear to Paul's heart (Rom. 16:12-16). In these cases, Paul was most likely recalling occasions of warm and comforting hospitality that he received from these women.²²⁰ Paul makes it clear that women were essential to the ministry of the Roman church.

²¹⁹ Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman, 1995), 272.

Other egalitarians and evangelical feminists claim that Paul did not write certain parts of his letters. For example, Annette Huizenga believes Paul didn't author the Pastoral Epistles; rather, she argues that they were composed after Paul's death in Asia Minor around 100 A.D. She reasons that someone who admired Paul decided to take his name and authority to address these congregations.²²¹ There is zero legitimate evidence to support this claim, however.

Did Paul have Authority?

If these writings are truly from Paul, then they are authoritative. Paul defends his ministry to the Galatian church by stating that he didn't receive his message from man, but he received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:11-12). His message was not invented, nor was it tradition, but it was a divine revelation.²²² Later, Paul explains how James, Peter, and John recognized the grace that was given to him by Christ, and that they sent him out to the gentiles (Gal. 2:9). The main leaders within the church recognized that Paul had been called and given authority by God.²²³

Scripture refers to Paul as an apostle several times (Rom. 1:1, 1 Cor. 1:1, 1 Cor. 15:9, 2 Cor. 1:1, Gal. 1:1, 1 Tim. 2:7, etc.). He was made a minister of the gospel (Eph. 3:6-7), having received his apostleship from Jesus directly (Acts 20:24). Even Peter

²²⁰ James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 8-16*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1988), 900.

²²¹ Annette Bourland Huizenga, "Paul as Pastor in 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus," *The Bible Today* 51 (2013): 295-301.

²²² Philip Graham Ryken, *Galatians*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2005), 30.

²²³ Douglas J. Moo, *Galatians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2013), 137-138.

acknowledged Paul's authority to write them (2 Peter 3:15-16), Peter's affirmed complete harmony between himself and Paul as apostles, helping validate Paul's teaching.²²⁴

Paul's writings are authoritative because they originated from God. Some argue that Paul's letters should not be used for teaching, and that we should only focus on the Gospel message of Jesus. This is flawed thinking. God has given us the writings of the apostles as further instruction on how to live righteous lives. Thus, Paul's writings, including those discussing women in ministry, are not just relevant but authoritative.

There are two areas in which Paul teaches authoritatively on gender roles. Like Peter, Paul discusses gender roles as they apply to the home, but he also teaches on gender roles within the church. While this project is focused on the church context, it is helpful to consider Paul's instructions for home life, too. The two are connected.

Gender Roles in the Home

This section breaks up Paul's teachings on the home by passage. There are several passages where Paul teaches on family relationships within the home. These sections of Scripture still very much apply to Christians today.

Ephesians 5

Ephesians 5 is used by patriarchal adherents, complementarians, partial egalitarians, full egalitarians, and evangelical feminists. Here, Paul gives instructions similar to Peter's. Wives are to be subject to their husbands and husbands are to love their wives (Eph. 5:22-33). Egalitarians highlight Paul's statement that the church ought to be

²²⁴ Gene L. Grene, *Jude & 2 Peter*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 338.

subject to one another in the fear of Christ (Eph. 5:21). Egalitarians take this to mean that Paul promotes mutual submission on everyone's part. They conclude that a wife should be subject to her husband and a husband should also be subject to his wife.²²⁵

The problem with this view is that Paul later explains what he means here by submission. In the next two chapters, Paul writes that women are to submit to their husbands (Eph. 5:22), children are to submit to their parents (Eph. 6:1-2), and slaves are to submit to their masters (Eph. 6:5-8). Paul is urging believers to be submissive or subordinate, but the particular ways in which Christians are to submit to each other are framed within specified roles: wives, children, and servants.²²⁶ In verse 21, then, Paul is teaching about submission to the appropriate authority. Paul's symmetrical use of submission is not used when he specifically instructs husbands, wives, children, parents, fathers, slaves, and masters. He does not tell husbands to be subject to their wives, nor parents to children, nor government to its citizens, nor masters to slaves.²²⁷

Within the family, Paul teaches that wives must be subject to their own husbands, citing the concept of headship (v. 22). According to Paul, the husband is the head of the wife, just as Christ is the head of the church (v. 23). As the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be subject to their husbands in everything (v.24). The idea of headship is key here. Headship does not mean that men get to dominate their wives, or refuse to take responsibility in the home. In this context, headship is an expression of

²²⁵ Grudem, *Feminism*, 188.

²²⁶ Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, 1990), 365.

²²⁷ Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 521.

authority. Paul concludes that just as the church submits to Christ as its head, so the headship of a husband is the reason for the wife's submission.²²⁸

Again, it is important to note that husbands have a command here, too. Like Christ loved and gave Himself up the church, husbands are to love their wives (v. 25). Christ is our ultimate example. Paul reminds his readers that God designed marriage to be this way from the beginning (Gen. 2:24) (v.31).²²⁹ Even before sin entered the world, God established marriage to function according to the headship paradigm, as Paul teaches.

Colossians 3

The Ephesians passage resembles Paul's words to the Colossian church. Paul instructs households by using concrete human examples. Paul addresses wives and husbands, then children and fathers, and finally slaves and masters. In each case, the subordinate member is mentioned first and is instructed to obey.²³⁰ Paul commands wives of the Colossian church to be subject to their husbands (Col. 3:18). Paul was not referring to women in general but wives. Evidently, single women could function as heads of their own households, as in the case of Lydia.²³¹ Likewise, husbands are to love their wives and not be embittered against them (Col. 3:19). Here, Paul gives husbands an additional command, saying that husbands must not be harsh towards their wives. David Pao

²²⁸ Bryan Chapell, *Ephesians*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2009), 273-276.

²²⁹ Walter L. Liefeld, *Ephesians*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997), 141.

²³⁰ Peter T. O'Brien, *Colossians, Philemon*, Word Biblical Commentary (Waco: Word, 1982), 220.

²³¹ James D.G. Dunn, *The Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 246.

explains that a man's love for his wife should reflect the love that Christ has for His people. Bitterness, then, serves as a rejection of Christ's love.²³²

Titus 2

In his letter to Titus, Paul echoes these same instructions. Paul teaches that wives should be subject to their husbands so that the Word of God will not be dishonored (Titus 2:5). The word for "to be in subjection" is a military term meaning "to be obedient."²³³ Paul taught the early church the importance of obedience throughout his ministry.²³⁴

Paul is straightforward in his teaching. Men, being the head, are to lead in the home in a way that is both loving and sacrificial. Women are to allow their husbands to lead by submitting to their leadership and authority. Both men and women struggle with following these instructions in daily life. Our sin nature rebels against these commands.

Gender Roles in the Church

Gender roles in the church and household are connected in the New Testament. Paul lays out instructions for both contexts, and it is important that we consider all that Paul says when discussing women's roles within the church.

1 Corinthians 11

As he explained to the Ephesian church, Paul talks openly about the order of the genders in his first letter to the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 11:2-16). He teaches that God is

²³² David W. Pao, *Colossians & Philemon*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 268.

²³³ John Phillips, *Exploring the Pastoral Epistles*, The John Phillips Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2004), 275.

²³⁴ J.N.D. Kelly, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Black's New Testament Commentary (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1960), 241.

the head of Christ, Christ is the head of man, and man is the head of woman (1 Cor. 11:3). The context of this teaching centers around specific issues that were happening in the Corinthian church. It appears that some women were praying, prophesying, or arguing for the right to do so, without the customary “head covering.” These women were disregarding customary distinctions between the sexes, a culturally disgraceful act for the time.²³⁵ Their countercultural attitude may have been influenced by the pagan religious environment that surrounded them.²³⁶

This issue must have been very important to Paul, given how much of his letter he sets aside for it. Paul instructs the men and women to conduct themselves in manners associated with their genders. For example, Paul assumes at this time that women should wear head coverings while praying and prophesying, (1 Cor. 11:5) and men should not cover their heads at all (1 Cor. 11:7). These cultural practices may not apply today, but the undertones of Paul’s reasoning do. Paul’s distinction that man is the head of woman was not a suggestion, but a true statement used to make his case that men and women should dress and act according to their sex. Paul shows us, then, that everyone has a head, and what individuals choose to do with their physical head in worship reflects on their metaphorical head, whether positively or negatively.²³⁷ Paul’s problem was not that women were praying and prophesying in church, but rather in the manner in which they were doing it.

²³⁵ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 549-550.

²³⁶ Gregory J. Lockwood, *1 Corinthians*, Concordia Commentary (Saint Louis: Concordia, 2000), 362.

²³⁷ David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 513-514.

Paul's reasoning includes statements such as, "man is the head of woman" (v. 3), "woman is the glory of man" (v.7), "woman originates from man, not man from the woman" (v.8), and "woman was created for the man's sake, not man for the woman's sake" (v.9). Paul, then, is recalling the creation account in Genesis to make his point. He then writes that—in the Lord—woman is *not* independent of man, and man is *not* independent of woman (v.11). Woman originated from man and man has his birth through woman (v.12). Men and women are complete equals in terms of their identities in Christ, but the creation order still carries meaning. F.W. Grosheide explains,

Although the woman is given a place below the man, vs. 10 makes abundantly clear that she is not the slave of the man. Her inferior position is not because the man has a greater degree of dignity than she. On the contrary, the apostle fights on two fronts. On the one side it was necessary to put the emancipated Corinthian ladies in their places, but on the other Paul seeks to prevent the woman from being considered inferior. There is a creation ordinance which must be maintained and if that is done the woman who is a creature of God, will have a position of honor, a position far better than that which Greek paganism was able to offer.²³⁸

The created order does not make men better than women, as both are made in the image of God. The created order does, however, establish distinct genders valued as equals but with different roles in the church. Within the new church era, it was expected and encouraged for men and women to worship Christ together.²³⁹ Although, equal in Christ, creation order still exists.

²³⁸ F. W. Grosheide, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1953), 258.

²³⁹ Fee, *Corinthians*, 549.

1 Corinthians 14

Paul further addresses gender roles later in his letter to the Corinthians. He instructs the church that women are to keep silent (1 Cor. 14:34). There has been significant debate around this verse; it is undeniably complicated. A few scholars, like Gordon Fee, have suggested that this verse was not written by Paul since the command seems to contradict early commands in this letter, namely Paul's statement that women are to prophecy in the church.²⁴⁰ Most scholars reject this conclusion, instead viewing this instruction as the authentic words of Paul. Anthony Thiselton counters Fee, arguing that it would be virtually impossible to examine the differences of the words of this letter independently of judgments about which verses, if any, constitute non-Pauline nature of writings.²⁴¹

D.A. Carson believes that the concept of submission presented in this passage is best understood in the context of the church weighing the proper place of prophesying. He reminds readers that "prophecy" in the New Testament is an extraordinarily broad category and should be recognized as Spirit-prompted utterances in church life. Carson explains that it is perfectly proper for Paul to elevate teaching above prophecy, especially if the teaching at hand is considered part of what eventually became Scripture. The church, then, ought to examine prophecies and compare them to biblical teaching. Carson believes this is mainly what Paul was trying to limit women from doing.²⁴²

²⁴⁰ Fee, *Corinthians*, 771-774.

²⁴¹ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1150.

²⁴² D.A. Carson, "Silent in the Churches," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 152-153.

This view is a reasonable interpretation, as Paul's main point in this passage isn't to restrict women from worshipping but to instruct the church on how to deal with a specific issue: prophecy. Paul clearly did not feel that a woman should offer interpretations on prophecies being uttered. He deems this improper (v.35), much like he did not think prophesying or speaking in tongues should be done without an interpreter (v.27, 28). If there were no interpreter present, Paul teaches that the one with a prophecy should keep quiet (v.28). He wanted church to be done properly and in an orderly manner (v.40). Women were expected to prophesy (1 Cor. 11), but they were not allowed to discuss their prophecies within the church (vv.34-35).

1 Timothy 2

Regarding the topic of women in ministry, Paul's statements in 1 Timothy 2 are the most debated ones in all Scripture. If Paul meant for this passage to apply to churches today, then it is clear that men and women have different functions and roles within the local church. If these words are not to be taken as instructive for today, then we can dismiss them as products of a certain time and place. A thorough look at this passage is essential for this topic.

Paul instructs women in this way:

Likewise, I want women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness. A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. But women will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint. (1 Tim. 2:9-15)

The context of this passage addresses how women should conduct themselves in the church. Paul was writing to his good friend, co-worker, and son in the faith (1 Cor. 4:17, Phil. 2:22), Timothy, who was serving in the city of Ephesus (1 Tim. 1:3). Paul's goal was to clarify the role women are to play in church meetings.²⁴³ Paul here was referring to the universal church—Christians everywhere and at any time gathered for public worship.²⁴⁴ Thus, it is important to note that Paul's instructions are meant only for public worship. His concepts were not necessarily to be applied to circumstances outside the gathering of the church, although we can safely assume that he would want women to be known for their good works both inside and outside the church. I don't believe one can accurately and consistently make a case that Paul's limitations on women in regard to teaching, exercising authority, and remaining quiet can be applied to other situations other than a worship service.

Appropriate adornment for woman is Paul's the theme in the first part of this passage. Paul describes the manner in which a woman is to carry herself in church. She is to be dressed modestly, without fancy and expensive clothing (v.9-10). Most likely, Paul was attempting to rectify a problem where women were flaunting their dress, jewelry, and hairstyles in a way that hurt the rest of the church body.²⁴⁵ Public worship, Paul explains, is to be focused on God, worshiping Him for what Christ's finished work (Gal. 1:10). This is a similar concept to what Paul had already written to the Philippian church.

²⁴³ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin Jr., *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 97.

²⁴⁴ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 107.

²⁴⁵ Philip H. Towner, *1-2 Timothy & Titus*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1994), 71.

Paul taught that both men and women should seek Christ above all things, not the empty riches of earthly glory.²⁴⁶

Paul opens the second part of this passage by shifting from the plural “women” to the singular “woman” in order to stress a general principle.²⁴⁷ Paul advises that a woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness (v.11). Undoubtedly, this command, taken in a straightforward manner, does not fit well in our western culture. The first thing to notice is that Paul expects women to be a part of the worship service, which we have already identified in other passages (1 Cor. 14). She has the same privilege of learning as men do. Yarbrough specifies that Paul is instructing that women must be allowed to learn within the assembly, which was an advancement over other traditions in Judaism that prevented women from being a part of the learning process (Acts 2:42).²⁴⁸ In Greek culture, women’s ability to learn was all over the map. Plato counted women as essentially equal to men, while Aristotle believed that women should be severely limited. Scholar Ralph Earle argues that Plutarch proposed beliefs similar to Paul’s message in this passage.²⁴⁹ Thus, the idea that women could learn as men would not have necessarily been shocking for those in the Ephesian church at this time.

²⁴⁶ Richard R. Melick Jr., *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman, 1991), 94.

²⁴⁷ Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 213.

²⁴⁸ Robert W. Yarbrough, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2018), 170.

²⁴⁹ Ralph Earle, *1 & 2 Timothy*, The Expositor’s Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981), 361.

The Greek word ἡσυχία (hesuchia) appears twice in this section, thus bracketing Paul's teaching on the role of women within the church and the concept of silence.²⁵⁰ Paul was forming what is called an *inclusio*, which marks the beginning and ending of his instruction and suggests Paul placed great importance on the issue of quietness in learning for women.²⁵¹ The word itself implies quietness and stillness.²⁵² Others, however, interpret Paul's use of this word as learning with a peaceable attitude.²⁵³ This same word is used in Paul's second letter to the Thessalonians, where he commands and exhorts the church to work in a quiet fashion (2 Thess. 3:12). Paul was emphasizing that one should live in a state of quietness without disturbance, so that they might not be a burden to others.²⁵⁴ Some translate this word to mean settling down or being calm.²⁵⁵ As in 2 Thessalonians, Paul does not mean that women should never speak, but that they should quietly learn without disturbances or interruptions within the worship service. This translation echoes Paul's commands to the Corinthian church. Here Paul instructed women not to weigh in on the prophecies but to listen and learn (1 Cor. 14:34-35).

²⁵⁰ John MacArthur, *1 Timothy*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1995), 85.

²⁵¹ Walter L. Liefeld, *1 & 2 Timothy, Titus*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1999), 97.

²⁵² Robert Young, *Young's Analytical Concordance to the Bible* (Peabody: Hendrickson), 888.

²⁵³ Knute Larson, *1 & 2 Thessalonians, 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon*, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville: Holman, 2000), 169.

²⁵⁴ Gordon D. Fee, *The First and Second Letters to the Thessalonians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 334.

²⁵⁵ Leon Morris, *The First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 258.

Submissiveness is not a popular term within our western culture. Here, the concept is broader than the relationship of husband and wife, focusing more on women in relation to men in authority within the church (v.11). Paul's concern is that a woman's learning would not turn into an occasion to overturn their function in the church, which was evident in the created order.²⁵⁶ This Greek word for submission ὑποταγή (hupotage) is in its noun-form, thus suggesting it's referring to a voluntary attitude that women are to possess as they learn.²⁵⁷ It is important to understand that this direction does not mean all women are to submit to all men. The context here specifically points to the church gathering, and only to the leadership of that church. Women are not to completely abandon their mind or conscience to the dictation of men, but to have an attitude of humility under the headship and leadership of men.²⁵⁸

Paul gets more specific in verse twelve, saying that women cannot teach or exercise authority over men, and that they must remain quiet (v.12). Several partial and full egalitarians like Gilbert Bilezikian, Gordon Fee, and Richard and Catherine Kroeger believe that Paul's command was temporary and should be translated as, "I do not now allow a woman to teach," based on his use of the present tense.²⁵⁹ Craig Blomberg clarifies that these attempts to relativize Paul's injunctions on the basis of grammar misuse both Hellenistic Greek and basic hermeneutics. The present tense is regularly used

²⁵⁶ George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, The New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 139.

²⁵⁷ W. E. Vine, Merrill F. Unger, and William White Jr., *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words* (Nashville: Nelson, 1985), 606.

²⁵⁸ D. Edmond Hiebert, *First Timothy* (Chicago: Moody, 1957), 60.

²⁵⁹ Grudem, *Feminism*, 299-300.

as a timeless sense for proverbial instruction. Blomberg also explains that the present tense *epitrepo* (allow), paired with the present tense non-indicative mood verbs *didaskain* (to teach) and *authentein* (exercise authority over), actually suggests continuous action—it should be read, then, as: *I continually do not allow*.²⁶⁰

Some commentators try to combine the concepts of women teaching and exercising authority over men within the church as one main command. Yarbrough argues that this type of interpretation runs against the pattern of Paul's construction, in which two distinct activities overlap but remain completely independent. In his commentary, Yarbrough explains that teaching and oversight are the primary tasks of a pastor.²⁶¹ To teach and preach out of Scripture in an official, authoritative manner in public worship is to exercise authority over a man, and while these two commands are independent, they are also connected.²⁶² It seems as though these two areas are the only two areas in which Paul did not allow women to participate in.

In the next verse, Paul actually goes into detail as to why he does not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man in the church. He breaks it down into two main reasons: 1. Adam was created first, then Eve; 2. It was Eve, through being deceived, fell into transgression; not Adam. It is so interesting that Paul points all the way back to the creation account to make his case (v.13-14). This should be identified as another reason to argue that Paul's command was only temporary or cultural. He

²⁶⁰ Craig L. Blomberg, "Neither Hierarchalist nor Egalitarian: Gender Roles in Paul," in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, ed. James R. Beck and Craig L. Blomberg (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 361-362.

²⁶¹ Yarbrough, *1 Timothy*, 180.

²⁶² William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Thessalonians, the Pastorals, and Hebrews*, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1957), 109.

references two events that took place thousands of years prior to the New Testament church. His reasoning is actually very multicultural since he references a completely different culture in his explanation. Associating the creation account and the fall of mankind with this command definitely suggests that this is a timeless instruction that transcends culture.

Adam and Eve's relationship was to be considered as complementary from the very beginning.²⁶³ We are reminded that chronological order among mankind seems to play some sort of part in determining leadership within the two most important institutions, the church and the home (v.13). Thomas Schreiner illustrates this instruction on women in the church as something that Paul would have inferred after reading the creation story. (Gen. 2:4-25) In Schreiner's view, Paul would have concluded that the order in which Adam and Eve were created actually signaled an important difference in roles between men and women.²⁶⁴ This, however, does not mean that man and women have differences in worth or value in any way. We are reminded that both man and woman are made in the image of God. (Gen. 1:27)

The second reason Paul offers is that it was not Adam, but Eve, who was deceived and who disobeyed first (v. 14). The order in which events occurred during the creation narrative matters to Paul. He asks his reader to remember Eve's being deceived by Satan in other letters, too, including 2 Corinthians. Paul is clear that the ancient historical

²⁶³ Donald Guthrie, *The Pastoral Epistles*, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 87.

²⁶⁴ Thomas R. Schreiner, "An Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:9-15: A Dialogue with Scholarship," in *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, ed. Andreas J. Kostenberger, Thomas R. Schreiner, and H. Scott Baldwin (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 135.

events of creation and the fall bear universal consequences that remain today.²⁶⁵ In Paul's line of thinking, Eve's sin demonstrated a serious infringement upon God's designed leadership roles for men and women. Some scholars, like George Knight, argue that in these passages Paul is arguing from creation, and then is using the fall narrative as an illustration for his argument.²⁶⁶ Regardless, it is clear that Paul used the creation and fall accounts as logical reasons for his instruction to Timothy and the Ephesian church.

Raymond Collins interprets Paul's instructions as a sign that he also considered Eve to be weaker than Adam, given she disobeyed first.²⁶⁷ There lacks compelling evidence, however, to make this claim. The events surrounding the fall do not seem to suggest that one sex is weaker spiritually. Both Adam and Eve chose to sin, and both were separated from God because of their rebellion. Eve was deceived, and Adam chose willingly to rebel.

Lastly, Paul describes women as being preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith, love, and sanctity with self-restraint (v. 15). There are two common views on this passage. One view is that women are saved through childbirth because of Mary's role in giving birth to Jesus. Others hold that Paul is implying simply that women are best suited for raising children. William Barclay holds to the latter, recognizing that women are naturally gifted in motherhood.²⁶⁸ However, it makes sense

²⁶⁵ Mark A. Seifrid, *The Second Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 404.

²⁶⁶ Knight, *Epistles*, 143.

²⁶⁷ Raymond F. Collins, *I & II Timothy and Titus*, The New Testament Library (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2002), 71.

²⁶⁸ William Barclay, *The Letters to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon*, The Daily Study Bible Series (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 68-69.

for Paul to be referring to Mary's act of giving birth to Jesus—along with the salvation He brings—since Paul already commented on the Fall. It's worth remembering that in the fall narrative, God curses Satan, saying that He would put enmity between Satan and the woman, and his seed and her seed.²⁶⁹

Paul makes it clear that men are to be the main leaders in the church. This in not to devalue women, and there may be situations, especially in missions, where a woman must lead the church for a short time. As men grow in their relationship with God, they should take on leadership roles as God designed them from creation. Joan Shetler, a missionary serving in the Philippines during the 60s and 70s, provides in her memoirs a great example of men stepping into God-designed leadership roles.²⁷⁰ She writes:

I continued translating in Timothy with my daddy (adoptive father of the Balangao people). And we came to a verse where Paul says to Timothy, "I don't allow women to teach men." My daddy didn't bat an eyelash. But that afternoon, after we'd finished work, he said to me, "Now what is that we're going to study on Sunday?" I thought he was just curious. I didn't know what was on his mind since fathers don't report to their children. So I told him. Sunday morning came, and before I could stand up to start, he stood up and said, "My daughter here knows more about this than I do, but we found in the Bible that women aren't supposed to teach men. So I guess I have to be the one!" And that was the end of my career, and the beginning of their teaching.²⁷¹

Was God upset at this situation? Of course not. Philip Ryken put it best when writing that God is glorified through situations like these. This is exactly what God wants us to do:

²⁶⁹ R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretations of St. Paul's Epistles to the Colossians, to the Thessalonians, to Timothy, to Titus, and to Philemon* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1946), 573-574.

²⁷⁰ Joanne Shetler, "My Story: Jaars Was There for Me," (2018) <https://www.jaars.org/updates/my-story-jaars-was-there-for-me/>

²⁷¹ Joanne Shetler, "Faithful in Obedience," in *Faithful Witness Urbana '84 Compendium*, ed. James McLeish (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1985), 105-106.

trust in the Scriptures and submit to His will for the church. It is a beautiful thing when men step forward to assume spiritual leadership, and when women encourage leadership through submission.²⁷² This is how the church is designed to function.

1 Timothy 3/ Titus 2

When studying the functions and roles of women within the church, it is necessary to look at specific offices within the church body. These official offices include elder/overseer and deacon. In his teachings on the qualifications of elders, Paul refers to an elder as a man. “If any man aspires to the office of overseer it is a fine work he desires to do” (1 Tim. 3:1); “An overseer must be the husband of one wife, who manages his household well” (1 Tim. 3:2, 4). In verse five, Paul questions how a man who does not know how to manage his own household would be able to take care of the church (1 Tim. 3:5). Paul assumed that a man would lead as an overseer in the Ephesian church.

Likewise, in his letter to Titus, Paul instructs that an elder (presbuteros) should be a man who is above reproach and the husband of one wife (Titus 1:6). He then compares these men to other men who are rebellious and deceitful (Titus 1:10). Paul thus assumes that the elders in the Cretan church would be male. John MacArthur claims that elder, overseer (bishop), and pastor refer to the same office—the different terms indicate various features of ministry, not necessarily different levels of leadership or authority.²⁷³ If his assessment is correct, it would suggest that all three offices should be held only by men.

²⁷² Philip Graham Ryken, *1 Timothy*, Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg: P&R, 2007), 105-106.

²⁷³ John MacArthur, *Titus*, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody, 1996), 21.

Deacons, too, were to be men of dignity who must first be tested (1 Tim. 3:8).

New Testament scholar Homer Kent argues that Scripture extends the office of deacon to women (deaconess) as well, thereby legitimizing their place within church leadership to a certain point. Indeed, Paul tells Timothy that women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate and faithful in all things (1 Tim. 3:11). However, Kent points out that the passage's grammatical structure indicates a transition to another concept. He claims this statement cannot refer to all women in the church, since the general instruction for all the women was given in the previous chapter. At the same time, Kent argues this verse cannot be limited to just the wives of deacons, since no pronoun is used with women (*gunaikas*) that would relate them to deacons. According to Kent, there is no grammatical connection between the women in verse 11 and the deacons in verses 8-10. He further highlights the fact that Paul doesn't make the same dual statement when referring to the office of overseer, but only in regard to the office of deacons/deaconess.²⁷⁴

Other scholars, such as Paul Enns, claim that the context suggests an unnatural break, should Paul be referring to a separate office of deaconess. The example of Phoebe is an interesting one. Phoebe was considered a servant (*diakonon*) of the church (Rom. 16:1), which could be translated as deaconess if the term is used in a technical sense.²⁷⁵ It seems, however, that the word is used in a general sense at the end of Paul's letter. Even so, Phoebe was considered a leader by Paul, particularly through her service.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁴ Homer A. Kent, *The Pastoral Epistles: Studies in I & II Timothy & Titus* (Chicago: Moody, 1958), 140-141.

²⁷⁵ Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody, 1989), 356-357.

Paul makes it clear that the elder or overseer role was to be held by a man. Not just any man was allowed to hold this office, but only a man who met Paul's stated qualifications. On the other hand, much debate still swirls around the office of deacon, with some arguing women can legitimately hold this role, too.

Galatians 3

Galatians 3:28 has received much attention in recent years, resulting in many uninformed interpretations being used to support ideological agendas.²⁷⁷ Evangelical feminist scholars have used this verse to claim that all church offices are open to women, and that there are no role differences between husbands and wives.²⁷⁸ Here, Paul gives three mandates: cultural, social, and sexual.²⁷⁹ He explains there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28). The context of this verse is key. Even egalitarians use this verse to claim there is no difference between the genders, but that is not what Paul is trying to convey. John Armstrong, a staunch egalitarian, admits that this text is not primarily about ministry and cannot be taken on its own when interpreting Paul's teachings on women.²⁸⁰

²⁷⁶ John Phillips, *Exploring Romans: The Gospel According to Paul* (Chicago: Moody, 1969), 261-262.

²⁷⁷ Timothy George, *Galatians*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: B&H, 1994), 282.

²⁷⁸ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Galatians*, Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 260.

²⁷⁹ Scot McKnight, *Galatians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 200-201.

²⁸⁰ John H. Armstrong, "Lessons My Mother Taught Me Without Trying," in *How I Changed My Mind About Women in Leadership: Compelling Stories from Prominent Evangelicals*, ed. Alan F. Johnson (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 27-28.

Within the context of this verse, Paul is explaining that there is no difference between men and women when it comes to our salvation. When he writes, “In Christ Jesus,” Paul is emphasizing that God’s redemptive work breaks down all normal barriers and distinctions.²⁸¹ All Christians belong to God, but also to each other, and this belonging does not consider race, rank, or sex.²⁸² To use this as a verse to support the specific roles of men and women in ministry is to take Paul’s words in a direction he never intended them to go.

Conclusion on Apostles’ View of Gender Roles

Many egalitarians and evangelical feminists have focused much attention on passages like the ones discussed in this chapter. They argue that these commands were given to those at specific churches during a specific time in history. Paul’s and Peter’s words, then, reflect ancient Roman culture, and their commands are not for men and women today. Douglas Moo cautions against this perspective, explaining that it is unlikely that Paul would have been so concerned to commend the church bodies that he would have also taught disingenuous New Testament ethic. Moreover, Moo encourages us to exercise a “hermeneutic of suspicion” on our own interpretive tendencies, since it can be all too easy to impose our own modern preoccupation of liberation and what we deem as “equality” onto the New Testament.²⁸³

²⁸¹ Ronald Y.K. Fung, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 176.

²⁸² John R.W. Stott, *The Message of the Galatians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1968), 99-100.

²⁸³ Douglas J. Moo, *The Letters to the Colossians and to Philemon*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 294-295.

CONCLUSION ON BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS OF PROJECT

In the beginning God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him, male and female He created them (Gen. 1:27). It is clear from the very beginning that God made man and woman to be co-rulers and complete equals. Men and women are to be joined together and become one flesh (Gen. 2:24). However, though men and women are equals, God also designed them to hold different roles within the family and the church.

During the fall of mankind, Eve was deceived by the serpent (Gen. 3:13). Adam, on the other hand, willfully rebelled against the Lord (Gen. 3:17). Both Adam and Eve were cursed by God and both experienced death as a result. Even though their relationship with their creator was broken, God still had a plan.

Through the nation of Israel, God was to bring salvation to all the people (John 4:22). God chose to accomplish this through men and women. The Old Testament is filled with women who God used to accomplish His plan; several are specifically mentioned in Jesus's lineage, Jews and non-Jews alike.

When Jesus came to earth, He resisted cultural norms. Jewish religious leaders constantly tried to quiet and destroy Him. Jesus's own life and ministry indicates that man was designed to lead. Jesus always referred to God as His Father, which He carried over from Old Testament times. He also came as a man Himself. When Jesus appointed leaders for His future church, He chose men. This does not mean that women didn't play a role, or that Jesus viewed them as lesser individuals. The Gospel accounts show Jesus as one who crossed cultural norms to care for and heal women. He did not fail women.

On the contrary, He liberated women and women flocked to Him. We do see, however, that Jesus appointed men to lead in a spiritual context.

The apostles also taught on gender roles. Luke gives many examples of women serving in leadership roles throughout the book of Acts. Women were an active part of the early church. Likewise, Peter and Paul acknowledge this before fleshing out specifics of gender roles.

Both Peter and Paul teach on gender roles within the home—that men are to lead within the home, but not in a domineering fashion that pervades our society. Men are to love their wives in a self-sacrificial way, and wives are to submit willingly and voluntarily to their husbands (Eph. 5:22-25). Man is not independent of woman, but he is considered the head of the woman in God's eyes (1 Cor. 11:3, 11).

Paul writes extensively on gender roles within the church. This is the second area in which God requires men to lead. Paul does not allow women to discuss and interpret prophetic words within a church gathering (1 Cor. 14:34). He also does not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man within the church (1 Tim. 2:12). Paul's reasoning points back to the creation and fall narratives in Genesis. This does not mean, however, that women have no place in the church. On the contrary, Paul instructs women to be present for biblical teaching, which wasn't always the case in the first century Jewish culture.

Paul also instructs on the church leadership positions of elder/overseer and deacon/deaconess. Both are to be held by esteemed believers who live up to high standards in their faith. Paul encourages only men to lead as elders/overseers, while it is debatable whether Paul taught that both men and women could hold the position of

deacon. Either way, Paul makes it clear that men are to lead in a self-sacrificial way, and he supports his teachings with a cross-cultural reference to the Genesis account.

Susan T. Foh summarizes this issue well:

Is God's arrangement fair? Our objections, whether philosophical or emotional, to this hierarchical system arise because we do not know what a sinless hierarchy is like. We know only the tyranny, willfulness, and condescension that even the best boss-underlining relationship has. In Eden, none of these perversions existed.²⁸⁴

Foh reminds us that we live in a fallen world. Not everything is simply spelled out in Scripture, with the issue of deaconesses being a prime example. But there are several instructions that are clear, including Paul's teaching that men are to lead. It has been this way from the beginning, and it will remain this way until Christ returns. It can be easy to allow our current culture to influence our understanding of Scripture, but this is not right. Scripture is clear: we are 100% equal in value and worth but created with differences; and God exclaimed that it was good (Gen. 1:31).

²⁸⁴ Foh, *Ministry*, 73.

CHAPTER 3

EXTRA-BIBLICAL FOUNDATIONS FOR THE PROJECT

We are not the first Christians to confront the issue of women's roles in ministry. It is an issue that has come up time again, especially over the past century. It is important to examine how Christian leaders have dealt with this topic in the past. Society continues to change, but God's truth stays the same; it transcends time and provides a sure foundation the church can rely on.

BEFORE WE BEGIN

Western culture today largely accepts women as God originally intended—as equals to men. Women now have the same rights as men; property rights, legal rights, marriage rights, etc.²⁸⁵ Unfortunately, throughout history, women have not always been treated well. Historically, men have dominated, overruled, and controlled the lives of women for their own gain.

Many societies today still exhibit dominance over women. In these societies, women are often treated as sexual objects. The Fang people of western Africa consider women to be valuable trading commodities. Pygmy men of central Africa pay the parents of young girls for sex. The indigenous Nootka people of Pacific Canada force newly engaged girls to sleep with their husbands, since men purchase wives primarily for sex. In many cultures, women do not have the right to choose their own husbands or file for divorce. Among the Truk people of Micronesia, husbands may legally prostitute their

²⁸⁵ Doriani, *Ministry*, 147.

wives, while the indigenous Mataco people in South America prohibit women from rejecting advances of their chief.²⁸⁶ War-induced sexual slavery, forced marriage, sexual servitude, and ritual sexual slavery are common across the globe.²⁸⁷ Bride burning continues in some parts of India, while certain communities in Africa force young girls to undergo genital mutilation to curb sexual desires. Parents in many Third World countries use modern technology to detect the sex of a fetus and terminate baby girls.²⁸⁸ Women in the Middle East don't have the same rights as men and are valued almost exclusively for their ability to bear children.

Beyond these jarring examples, women are mistreated everyday across the United States. In response, federal, state, and local governments have passed countless laws aimed at increasing rights and protection for women. For instance, the International Marriage Broker Regulation Act of 2005 requires background checks for U.S. citizens attempting to bring mail-order brides into the country.²⁸⁹ The United States is a major source of human sex trafficking.²⁹⁰ Sin's presence—both in the U.S. and around the world—is pervasive, and the consequences inordinately fall on women. The fact that women are used and abused at a much higher rate than men does not reflect the equality between the sexes that we see in Scripture. God hates discrimination and sexism.

²⁸⁶ Richard Symanski, *The Immoral Landscape: Female Prostitution in Western Societies* (Toronto: Butterworth, 1981), 250.

²⁸⁷ Andrea Parrot and Nina Cummings, *Sexual Enslavement of Girls and Women Worldwide* (Westport: Praeger, 2008), 27-78.

²⁸⁸ Strauch, *Men & Women*, 12.

²⁸⁹ Kimberly Mehlman-Orozco, *Hidden in Plain Sight: America's Slaves of the New Millennium* (Santa Barbara: Praeger, 2017), 37.

²⁹⁰ Louise Shelley, *Human Trafficking: A Global Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge Press, 2010), 229.

Christians everywhere should support and stand up for women who endure abuse and discrimination.

HISTORICAL APPROACH TO WOMEN IN MINISTRY

The idea that women are not to teach men, as stated in 1 Timothy 2:11-12, has been a nearly universally held belief in the Christian church throughout history. Only in the twentieth century did this view come under major attack.²⁹¹ Many egalitarians and evangelical feminists have challenged the church's position over the past century. These critics have argued that women have often served in leadership positions since the conception of the church in Acts. As discussed in chapter two, God does not ban women from leading, but He does prohibit women from serving as elders and from teaching men. All other positions and serving opportunities seem to be permissible for both men and women, though people with patriarchal views may disagree.

With a biblical foundation in place, it is important to analyze how Christians have dealt with this topic throughout history. An examination of church history is helpful and significant, but only when framed within the context of Scripture. There are several instances where the early church got it wrong. The New Testament shows that the early church often deviated from Scripture and chased after worldly ideas (2 Pet. 2:1).

Tradition or teaching should not be followed simply because "that's how it was done in the past." Scripture, rather, is the gatekeeper to our theology. We must remember that we are susceptible to drifting off course in our theology. Church history is full of times where the church needed to realign its theology with Scripture, the Reformation

²⁹¹ Ryken, *1 Timothy*, 98.

being one of the most well-known examples. The church must always ground its beliefs in the truth of God's Word, not man-made ideas and traditions, and realign when necessary.

My goals in briefly examining church history are twofold. First, I want to identify how church leadership viewed this issue over time. Second, I want to understand the roles women have played within the church throughout history. We will consider the early church, plus the medieval, reformation, and modern eras.

The Early Church

We have access to many writings from early church fathers that show where they stood on this issue. It appears that in the early church, women were very involved in leading. As mentioned, the New Testament is filled with women leading and serving integral roles within the church, although we have no examples of women teaching men during a church gathering. Sources from the early church period suggest that women did not stop leading and serving after the New Testament period. Women are well documented throughout history playing important roles in the church that are distinct from those held by men.

Church Leaders

For example, Ignatius of Antioch (c. 35- 115 A.D.) wrote a letter to Polycarp, urging him to form a council and appoint a man as courier for his message.²⁹² Although

²⁹² Daniel Doriani, "A History of the Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2," in *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, ed. Andreas J. Kostenberger, Thomas R. Schreiner, and H. Scott Baldwin (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 221.

Ignatius preferred a man for this job, other sources suggest that women were very involved in the church around this time. In 113 A.D., Pliny the Younger wrote a letter to Emperor Trajan reporting on the status of Christianity in his jurisdiction.²⁹³ Pliny explains that he acquired information by torturing two female slaves, who were deaconesses in the church.²⁹⁴ Thus, at this time, the church allowed deaconesses, and given the fact that slaves could serve as deaconesses, both the poor and rich served in this position. Pliny's letter is the earliest writing that refers to deaconess as a distinct position.²⁹⁵

Clement of Alexandria (c. 150-c. 215 A.D.) spent much of his time defending traditional Christian views against Gnosticism.²⁹⁶ In one of his writings he points out that wives were ministering alongside the apostles.²⁹⁷ Clement was a teacher of another early church father, Origen of Alexandria (c. 185-c. 254 A.D.), who believed women should not teach men.²⁹⁸ We know, however, that women participated in Origen's lectures, since Mammaea, the mother of Emperor Alexander Severus, brought Origen to Antioch so she could test his understanding of God (Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.21.3ff).²⁹⁹ Origen criticized

²⁹³ Allen Cabaniss, "The Harrowing of Hell, Psalm 24, and Pliny the Younger: A Note," *Vigilae Christianae* 7 (1953): 71.

²⁹⁴ Doriani, *Interpretation*, 221.

²⁹⁵ Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek, *Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documentary History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 2005), 27.

²⁹⁶ Mark Galli and Ted Olsen, *131 Christians Everyone Should Know* (Nashville: Christianity Today Inc., 2000), 52.

²⁹⁷ Stephen Dray, "Women in Church History: An Examination of Pre-Reformation Convictions and Practice," *Evangel*, 21 (2003): 22-25.

²⁹⁸ Doriani, *Interpretation*, 222-223.

²⁹⁹ William Weinrich, "Women in the History of the Church: Learned and Holy, but Not Pastors," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 266.

the Montanists, who were arguing for the appointment of women teachers. They grounded their argument in the story of Phillip's daughters, who were prophetesses in the New Testament (Acts 21:8-9). Origen responded, "If the daughters of Philip prophesied, at least they did not speak in the assemblies; for we do not find this fact in the Acts of the Apostles."³⁰⁰ This was Origen's opinion regarding the worship service, but he also describes women as having been established as deacons.³⁰¹ In fact, on the subject of Romans 16:1-2, Origen writes, "This text teaches. . . two things: that there are. . . women deacons in the church, and that women, who have given assistance to so many people and who by their good works deserve to be praised by the apostle, should be accepted in the diaconate" (*Commentary on the Epistle to Romans*).³⁰²

Tertullian of Carthage (c. 140 – c. 220 A.D.) also taught on what women can and cannot do within the church.³⁰³ He wrote, "It is not permitted for a woman to speak in church. Neither may she teach, baptize, offer, nor claim for herself any function proper to a man, least of all the sacerdotal office" (*On the Veiling of Virgins* 9.1).³⁰⁴ Tertullian explicitly permitted women to prophesy, provided the prophecy was truly inspired by God.³⁰⁵ At first glance, his statements seem contradictory; however, they fit comfortably within the New Testament teachings.

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 275.

³⁰¹ Magdalena Kubow, "Women in the Church? A Historical Survey," *Magistra* 21 (2015): 59.

³⁰² Gregg R. Allison, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to Christian Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011), 594.

³⁰³ Erik A. de Boer, "Tertullian on 'Barnabas' Letter to the Hebrews in De pudicitia 20.1-5," *Vigiliae Christianae* 68 (2014): 243.

³⁰⁴ Weinrich, *History*, 273.

³⁰⁵ Doriani, *Interpretation*, 235.

Tertullian was part of the Montanism movement. Within Montanism, two prophetesses, Prisca and Maximilla, claimed to be mouthpieces of the Holy Spirit. They taught the “New Prophecy” in which they declared the nearness of Christ’s return. It also taught to abandon marital relations, multiply fasts, die as a martyr, and eat dry food. It is important to note that Maximilla’s predictions did not come true.³⁰⁶ It’s interesting, though, that Tertullian, though believing in Prisca and Maximilla’s new prophecy, still argued that women should not teach in the assembly.

Cyprian of Carthage (c. 200- 258 A.D.) was another early church father, and one who faced empire-wide persecution and who was eventually martyred for his faith.³⁰⁷ He converted to Christianity around 246 AD.³⁰⁸ Cyprian, in his interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11-14 and 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, wrote that “a woman ought to be silent in the church” defending his view as Biblical (*The Treatises of Cyprian*).³⁰⁹ Even though he taught that only men should be pastors and teachers, he also wrote in his *Epistles* that God’s grace was divided equally among all.³¹⁰

John Chrysostom (c. 349 – c. 407 A.D.) was a church leader and bishop of Constantinople.³¹¹ He stressed that women were not to teach in any part of the church,

³⁰⁶ David F. Wright, “The Montanists,” in *Introduction to the History of Christianity*, ed. Tim Dowley (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2002), 87.

³⁰⁷ Alan Kreider, “Patience in the Missional Thought and Practice of the Early Church: The Case of Cyprian of Carthage,” *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 39 (2015): 220.

³⁰⁸ Robert Mayes, “The Lord’s Supper in the Theology of Cyprian of Carthage,” *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 74 (2010): 307.

³⁰⁹ Doriani, *Interpretation*, 221.

³¹⁰ Dray, *Examination*, 22-25.

³¹¹ Demetrios E. Tonias, “What Does America Have to Do with Antioch? John Chrysostom and the Contemporary Relevance of Patristics,” *Currents in Theology and Mission* 43 (2016): 16-21.

because they had not received commission from God. In his mind, this did not make women spiritually inferior, but it did lead to men and women having different roles in the church.³¹² John Chrysostom often wrote letters to female friends, several of whom were deacons.³¹³ Furthermore, the *Apostolic Constitutions* refer to the ordination of deaconesses and permitted women to prophesy and pray publicly while forbidding public teaching.³¹⁴

A woman named Olympias was a deaconess who was born into wealth in Constantinople. She was taught by Theodosia, sister of Amphilocius of Iconium. Olympias used her wealth to establish a convent for women, as well as several hospitals. Olympias, who was eventually exiled, was a good friend of John Chrysostom and dedicated her life to serving the church.³¹⁵

Epiphanius (d.c. 403 A.D.) was originally from a small village in Palestine, but spent part of his youth training in the ascetic life in Egypt. He later returned home to establish a monastery where he became known as a defender of orthodoxy, eventually becoming a bishop.³¹⁶ Epiphanius wrote, “Never from the beginning of the world has a woman served God as a priest” (*Against the Heresies* 78-79).³¹⁷ During the fifth century, Greek Catholics did not allow women to serve as priests, but they may have allowed

³¹² Dray, *Examination*, 22-25.

³¹³ Pauliina Pylvanainen, “More Than Serving: The Tasks of Female Deacons in The Apostolic Constitutions and The Letters to Olympias,” *Phronema* 33 (2018), 73-90.

³¹⁴ Dray, *Examination*, 22-25.

³¹⁵ Weinrich, *History*, 265-266.

³¹⁶ Young Richard Kim, “An Iconic Odd Couple: The Hagiographic Rehabilitation of Epiphanius and John Chrysostom,” *Church History* 87 (2018): 984-985.

³¹⁷ Weinrich, *History*, 275.

women to serve at the altars, as suggested in a letter from Pope Gelasius to the Bishops of Lucania, explaining that it is not appropriate for women to perform certain tasks within the church.³¹⁸

The Widows

Besides deaconesses, early church sources often reference another distinct group of women: the widows. Several accounts reference “the widows”—women who were dedicated to prayer and serving. It could be that “the widows” refers to the same office as deaconess. Tertullian calls the widows an “order” and gives them a place of honor within the church gathering (*On Modesty* 13.4). The *Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus (c. 210 A.D.) references widows as being “appointed to prayer” while the *Didaskalia Apostolorum* (Syria, c. 230 A.D.) speaks of the widows as having the primary duty of prayer. Origen lists the widows alongside bishops, elders, and deacons. (*Hom. in Luc.* 17).³¹⁹

Women Who Wrote

Vibia Perpetua (d.c. 203 A.D.) likely drafted the earliest writing we have from a Christian woman. Perpetua was eventually martyred under Septimius Severus of the Roman Empire.³²⁰ She kept a prison diary in which she depicted the circumstances that led her to death, including her visions, her conversations with her father who begged her

³¹⁸ Phyllis Zagano, “Women Deacons and Service at the Altar,” *Theological Studies* 79 (2018): 590-608.

³¹⁹ Weinrich, *History*, 264.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 267.

to renounce Christ so she may be saved, and her testimony in court (*Passion of Perpetua and Felicity*).³²¹

Another document written by a woman in the early church was *Travels* by Egeria, a noble woman from southern France who traveled to Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Asia Minor. She took notes along the way, later combining them into one document.³²² As she traveled, she met with leaders of various churches, such as the bishop of Edessa (c. 385).³²³

Women Martyred

Women also died for their faith in the early years of the church. Charito, a young Christian woman, was beheaded alongside Justin Martyr, most likely because she was associated with Christianity and his academic work.³²⁴ This event took place as early as 165 A.D.³²⁵ Likewise, a slave girl named Blandina (d. 177 A.D.), was put to death and hung on a post.³²⁶

Origen had many students, both men and women. One of his female students, Potamiaena (d.c. 210 A.D.), influenced the soldier who led her to her own death. He later

³²¹ Shannon Dunn, "The Female Martyr and the Politics of Death: An Examination of the Martyr Discourses of Vibia Perpetua and Wafa Idris," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion* 78 (2010): 206.

³²² Weinrich, *History*, 267.

³²³ Hagith Sivan, "Who was Egeria: Piety and Pilgrimage in the Age of Gratian," *Harvard Theological Review* 81 (1988): 64.

³²⁴ Weinrich, *History*, 266.

³²⁵ Galli and Olsen, *131 Christians*, 49.

³²⁶ Weinrich, *History*, 270.

became a Christian martyr himself (*Hist. eccl.* 6.5.7). A century later, Eusebius claimed that the story of Potamiaena was still being sung by her fellow-countrymen (*Hist. eccl.* 6.5.1).³²⁷

Eusebius wrote an account of those who suffered martyrdom in Alexandria during the third century. He describes a woman named Quinta, a Christian, who refused to worship an idol and was bound and dragged through the city before being stoned to death. Similarly, an older woman named Apollonia was beaten and burned alive. Ammonarium was tortured for a long time before a judge had her killed. Two other women, Mercuria and Dionysia, were stabbed to death for their faith.³²⁸

Conclusion on the Early Church

The majority of the early church fathers believed that women were not to hold an eldership role or teach men within the church assembly. In fact, the Council of Saragossa (380 A.D.) warned women to avoid attending a meeting where a woman might give a reading or teach.³²⁹ Does this mean that early church leaders devalued women? Of course not. The early church fathers viewed women as equals in their spirituality, and many of the leaders within the early church recognized the role of deaconess.

In fact, it may be that most early church fathers encouraged women to hold the role of deaconess. Leaders such as Theodoret of Cyrrhus (c. 393 – c. 458 A.D.), Theodore of Mopsuestia (c. 350 – c. 428 A.D.), Pelagius (c. 354 – c. 418 A.D.), Severus

³²⁷ Ibid., 270.

³²⁸ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, Translated by C F. Cruse (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1998), 225-228.

³²⁹ Weinrich, *History*, 276.

of Antioch (c. 465 – c. 538 A.D.), and Palladius of Galatia (c. 363 – c. 425 A.D.) all mention women as holding the office of deacon, or deaconess, in their writings.³³⁰ Additionally, the Council of Orange (441 A.D.) acknowledged deaconesses while ruling that women are not to be ordained.³³¹ In the early church, leadership within the church became a three-tiered order of bishops, elders, and deacons and deaconesses, who assisted in the functioning of the church.³³² Women were involved and often respected by early church fathers, who recognized distinct roles within church ministry for men and women.

The Middle Ages

In the Middle Ages, women continued to serve in the church while still, on the whole, not preaching or teaching to church gatherings. The only exceptions were instances of women who had visions or prophecies. During the Middle Ages, women became more prominent in the church and the position of deaconess became more respected.

Church Leaders

The *Statuta Ecclesiae Antiqua* of Gennadius of Marseilles (c. 480 A.D.) allows nuns and widows to teach women who have been baptized, but reiterates that women are not to teach men in an assembly nor baptize.³³³ Similarly, Photius, the patriarch of

³³⁰ Madigan & Osiek, *Ordained*, 19-23.

³³¹ Weinrich, *History*, 276.

³³² Allison, *Theology*, 591.

Constantinople (c. 858 – c. 877 A.D.), was one of the most important exegetes of the Greek Church.³³⁴ He wrote, “A woman does not become a priestess” (*Nomocanon* 1.37).³³⁵

Thomas Aquinas (c. 1225 – 1274) is widely recognized as the greatest theologian of the Middle Ages.³³⁶ He reasoned that prophecy was granted to women since all Christians have received gifts. Aquinas also argued that women received the gifts of wisdom and knowledge as well, but the gifts would never be used unless they were allowed to speak. Thomas Aquinas permitted women to prophesy and speak if inspired by God, but he also stressed that women may not teach publicly in the church according to 1 Timothy 2. He also would not allow women to hold the office of elder or bishop. He explained that female priests might incite men to lust and believed that women were to be subject to men (*Well Tempered Passion*).³³⁷

Bonaventure (c. 1221 – 1274) was a thirteenth-century Franciscan theologian and philosopher.³³⁸ He taught that only males should receive ordination even though he recognized Deborah as having been judge of Israel. On the other hand, Bonaventure

³³³ Weinrich, *History*, 277.

³³⁴ Theodora Antonopoulou, “Eustathius of Antioch and a Fragment Attributed to Patriarch Photius,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 57 (2006): 546.

³³⁵ Weinrich, *History*, 274.

³³⁶ Galli and Olsen, *131 Christians*, 30.

³³⁷ Doriani, *Interpretation*, 230-235.

³³⁸ Kasey Kimball, “Bonaventure on Creation: A Ressourcement for the Modern World,” *Crux* 51 (2015): 15.

recognized the women who had shown virtue in martyrdom and religious life.³³⁹ He believed Scripture forbade the ordination of women.

Duns Scotus (c. 1266 – 1308) agreed that women should not be ordained, citing God's will as his primary reason. Rather than arguing that allowing a women to teach would negatively impact the church, or that women were created to be subordinate, Scotus explained that the church would never have limited women in any spiritual role on its own, but because of Scripture, they had to. Scripture, being God's will; simply said women were not to teach. Scotus pointed out that Jesus chose not to ordain His mother—and if the Son of God chose not to ordain Mary, then no woman should be ordained.³⁴⁰

Medieval Sects

Though the church as a whole held that women should be prohibited from teaching to church gatherings, there were a few sects of believers that allowed it. John Huss (Jan Hus) (c. 1369 – 1415) originally became a priest to secure a good livelihood.³⁴¹ By the time Huss was 30 years old, he became the most popular preacher of his century and a reputable church leader in his country.³⁴² Many people followed Huss' teachings, even after his execution by the Catholic church, and they became known as Hussites.³⁴³

³³⁹ Doriani, *Interpretation*, 232.

³⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 232.

³⁴¹ Galli and Olsen, *131 Christians*, 370.

³⁴² George Boardman Eager, "Lessons From the Life of John Huss, 500 Years After," *Review & Expositor* 12 (1915): 510.

³⁴³ Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of Christianity: The Early Church to Present Day* (Peabody: Prince, 1984), 348-352.

The Hussites promoted laity, including women, to the office of preacher. In a different fashion, the Cathari allowed women to administer the Consolamentum, their most important rite, which guaranteed the absolution of sin. The latter was a truly heretical group.³⁴⁴

Waldensians were a group who taught a simple communal lifestyle, preached Scripture in vernacular, emphasized the Sermon on the Mount, encouraged lay preaching, denied purgatory, and permitted women to teach and preach within the church assembly.³⁴⁵ Peter Waldo (c. 1140 – c. 1200), a rich merchant of Lyons, started the movement by attracting followers who travelled and preached, many of whom were women.³⁴⁶ Leadership within the mainline Christian church had serious problems with this movement because its women taught and preached. A document written in 1270 by David of Augsburg explained:

And because they (the Waldensians) presumed to interpret the words of the gospel in a sense of their own, not perceiving that there were any other, they said that the entire gospel ought to be obeyed literally. And they boasted that they wished to do this, and that they only were the true imitators of Christ... This was their first heresy, contempt of the power of the church... In their zeal they lead many others astray along with them. They teach even little girls the words of the Gospels and Epistles, so that they may be trained in error from their childhood... They teach their docile and fluent disciples to repeat the words of the Gospels and the sayings of the apostles... by heart, in their common language, so that they may know how to teach others and lead the faithful astray (David of Augsburg: *On the Waldensians of Bavaria, 1270*).³⁴⁷

³⁴⁴ Doriani, *Interpretation*, 235.

³⁴⁵ Robert C. Walton, *Chronological and Background Charts of Church History* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), Chart 45.

³⁴⁶ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper, 1953), 451-453.

³⁴⁷ Allison, *Theology*, 126-127.

During this same time, another church leader wrote:

There are six causes of heresy (concerning the Waldensians)... The second cause is that men and women, great and lesser, day and night, do not cease to learn and teach... (*The Passau Anonymous: On the Origins of Heresy and the Sect of the Waldensians*).³⁴⁸

Many leaders in the Catholic church did not believe the common person should be allowed to study Scripture, especially women. David of Augsburg highlights the most extreme violation, as the Waldensians were teaching girls how to read God's Word. Because of this, the Catholic Church fiercely persecuted the Waldensians.³⁴⁹ Geoffroy of Auxerre is another example of a church leader who believed women should not teach or preach in the church assembly, and he condemned the Waldensians for encouraging this practice.³⁵⁰ In response to passages such as 1 Timothy 2, Waldensians replied that women should teach if not formally preach, basing their argument from Titus 2:3. Most likely, the Waldensians also allowed women to administer the sacraments.³⁵¹

³⁴⁸ Passau Anonymous, "On the Origins of Heresy and the Sect of the Waldensians," in *Heresy and Authority in Medieval Europe*, ed. Edward Peters (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1980), 150.

³⁴⁹ Allison, *Theology*, 576.

³⁵⁰ Beverly Mayne Kienzle, "The Prostitute-Teacher: Patterns of Polemic Against Medieval Waldensian Women Preachers," in *Women Preachers and Prophets Through Two Millennia of Christianity*, ed. Beverly Maine Kienzle and Pamela J. Walker (Los Angeles: University of California, 1998), 101.

³⁵¹ Doriani, *Interpreting*, 235.

The Impact of Mysticism

Mysticism became increasingly popular in the medieval church, and many women led and prophesied within this movement. Christian mystics believed contemplation did not come through one's normal senses, but rather that it welled up from the depths of the soul—where God dwelled—and that it was a mysterious knowledge of the special union we have with God.³⁵² Thomas Aquinas and Bonaventure were both considered mystics. The Cistercian foundation for women at Helfta was a school of mysticism. Prominent in this school was Gertrude the Great (c. 1256 – c. 1302), who was known for her visions. She once claimed that her heart united to the baby Jesus on a Christmas night. Mechtilde of Hackborn (d.c. 1310) and Mechtilde (c.1217 – 1282) were also well known for their visions.³⁵³

Hildegard of Bingen (1098 – 1179) was a well-known Benedictine abbess during the Middle Ages.³⁵⁴ When she was 43, she reported that a vision had commanded her to write down what she saw and heard. In response, Hildegard wrote about the Gospel and other books in both the Old and New Testaments. Despite her contributions to the church, Hildegard was never ordained. She referred to herself as an unlearned woman who had simply received visions from God and then had written them down.³⁵⁵ She wasn't the only well-known abbess who ruled a monastery, however. In fact, abbesses and

³⁵² Gary Elkins, "Mysticism," in *The Popular Encyclopedia of Apologetics: Surveying the Evidence for the Truth of Christianity*, ed. Ed Hindson and Ergun Caner (Eugene: Harvest House, 2008), 364.

³⁵³ Latourette, *Christianity*, 539.

³⁵⁴ Miroslav Zvelebil, "Hildegard of Bingen and the Hermetic Treatise Asclepius," *Communio Viatorum* 59 (2017): 98.

³⁵⁵ Doriani, *Interpretation*, 230.

distinguished female church leaders also attended various councils and ecclesiastical synods. Abbesses such as Abbess Hilda attended the Council of Whitby (664 A.D.) and Abbess Aelfled attended the Synod of Nidd (706 A.D.).³⁵⁶

Julian of Norwich, the first known woman to write in English, lived at St. Julian's Church of Norwich, England. She devoted her life to prayer and ministering to visitors who needed her wisdom. At about 30 years old, she became sick and, on her deathbed, mystically saw Christ's passion—a manifestation of Jesus's love for her. That same night she was miraculously healed.³⁵⁷ After her healing, she began to proclaim her visions to those in the church.³⁵⁸ Angela of Foligno serves as another example of an anchoress. Angela wrote the *Divine Consolations*, which was a record of visions and spiritual experiences. It was one of the best-known mystical writings during this time.³⁵⁹

Hrotsvith (or Hroswitha) (c. 935 - c. 973 A.D.) served God by writing plays that were morally inspiring. In her plays, Hrotsvith recounted various heroic acts of former Christians.³⁶⁰ She wrote her plays while living in the thriving abbey of Gandersheim in Saxony.³⁶¹ Hrotsvith was a visionary, though she declared herself unlearned, lacking in

³⁵⁶ Weinrich, *History*, 271.

³⁵⁷ Kate Hanch, "Participation in God; Oned by Love: Paul Fiddes in Dialogue with Julian of Norwich," *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 44 (2017): 70.

³⁵⁸ Doriani, *Interpretation*, 233.

³⁵⁹ W.W. Stewart, "The Mystical Movement in the Middle Ages," *Anglican Theological Review* 11 (1928): 150.

³⁶⁰ Paula S. Datsko Barker, "Courageous Voices: Women Becoming Selves in History," *Daughters of Sarah* 21 (1995): 8-9.

³⁶¹ Colleen D. Richmond, "Hrotsvit's 'Sapientia': Rhetorical Power and Women of Wisdom," *Renascence* 55 (2003): 133.

thoroughness, and a lowly woman.³⁶² She was extremely humble and challenged her readers to live a Christ-like life. Likewise, Meister Eckhart (c.1260 – c.1327) was known as a great mystic who taught that the true goal in life was to complete separation from the world of senses by being completely absorbed into the “Divine Unknown.” Many people followed Eckhart’s teachings.³⁶³

Another well-known mystic of the medieval era was Bridget or Brigitta of Sweden (c. 1303 – 1373). She claimed to have visions from childhood in which she would talk with Christ or the Virgin Mary. After the death of her husband in 1344, her visions increased, and she began prophesying from these revelations. At one point, she even rebuked the King of Sweden for collecting too many taxes from his subjects. She went on to found an order, known as the Bridgettines, which her daughter carried on after her death, and the movement expanded throughout Europe.³⁶⁴

Marguerite Porete (d.c. 1300) was an important leader within the Beguine movement. Her book, *The Mirror of Simple Souls* was extremely popular in France, Italy, and England.³⁶⁵ Unfortunately, she was burned at the stake, charged by the church with advocating indifference to moral dogmas and encouraging sinful behavior.³⁶⁶

³⁶² Doriani, *Interpretation*, 234.

³⁶³ Paul R. Spickard and Kevin M. Cragg, *A Global History of Christians: How Everyday Believers Experienced Their World* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 151.

³⁶⁴ Latourette, *History*, 540.

³⁶⁵ Weinrich, *History*, 269.

³⁶⁶ Juan Miguel Marin, “A Beguine’s Spectre: Marguerite Porete (1310), Achille Gagliardi (1607), and Their Collaboration Across Time,” *The Way* 51 (2012): 95-96.

Catherine of Siena (1347 – 1380) was instrumental in the return of Pope Gregory XI to Rome from the “Babylonian Captivity” of the papacy.³⁶⁷ She too was famed for her mystical visions.³⁶⁸ At one point she found herself treating a woman with cancer. She reasoned that her revulsion at the tumor’s smell was just an effort from Satan to turn her away from the patient. At this time, she drank a bowl full of pus from the wound to discipline her body. Later on that night she received a vision of Jesus who offered her the opportunity to drink the blood from his wounds. Raymond of Capua records this event in his hagiographic of Catherine.³⁶⁹ Here we have another example of a female leader within Christian society who shared her visions with others.

Margery Kempe (1373 – 1438) is another mystic who claimed to hear words directly from God. She was a mother of fourteen children and convinced her husband to join her in becoming a visionary and traveling evangelist.³⁷⁰ She wrote *The book of Margery Kempe* after the Lord commanded her to “write down her feelings and revelations, and her form of living so that God’s goodness might be known to all the world.”³⁷¹

Catherine of Genoa (Caterina Fieschi Adorno) (1447 – 1510) was another medieval woman who claimed to have visions. She committed her life to care for the

³⁶⁷ Weinrich, *History*, 271.

³⁶⁸ Doriani, *Interpretation*, 234.

³⁶⁹ James A. White, “Hungering for Maleness: Catherine of Siena and the Medieval Public Sphere,” *Religious Studies and Theology* 33 (2014): 157.

³⁷⁰ Doriani, *Interpretation*, 234.

³⁷¹ Maxine Hancock, “Mysticism, Dissidence and Didacticism: Recovering the Tradition of Women Writing the Faith, 1350–1800,” *Crux* 32 (1996): 22.

poor and diseased at the Genoese Hospital. She, too, was a mystical writer.³⁷² She claimed, “The things that I speak about work within me in secret and with great power” (*Purgation and Purgatory; The Spiritual Dialogue*, 86).³⁷³

Conclusion on Middle Ages

The church greatly increased during the Middle Ages. There are many ancient records which show serious commitment on behalf of the church to new church organizations, churches, chantries, and the popularity of the saints.³⁷⁴ When women taught men in the Middle Ages, they seemed to do so by circumventing the ordinary channels for authority. This idea wasn’t necessarily an issue with the interpretation of 1 Timothy 2, because it was generally believed that the Lord transcended this rule with a vision.³⁷⁵ This was a faulty way of thinking, and those in the Middle Ages risked following man-made traditions and ideas instead of Scripture. Because of the mysticism movement, much of the church moved off course. On this point, Doriani states, “In short, if a woman wanted to teach in the Middle Ages, the unwritten rule was, “Have a vision, but not a husband.””³⁷⁶

³⁷² Weinrich, *History*, 271.

³⁷³ Harvey D. Egan, “In Purgatory We Shall All Be Mystics,” *Theological Studies* 73 (2012): 875.

³⁷⁴ Marguerite Van Die, “The Spiritual Legacy of the Reformation,” *Touchstone* (2019): 41.

³⁷⁵ Doriani, *Interpretation*, 235.

³⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 234.

The Reformation

The Reformation was a wide-ranging movement of religious renewal in Europe, occurring mostly in the sixteenth century. Martin Luther is the most well-known church leader of all the reformers, but he was not the only one who preached against late-medieval Catholicism. Others, such as Erasmus, Zurich, and John Calvin, also taught and led people away from Catholicism.³⁷⁷

Mysticism continued through the reformation period as men and women exaggerated their capacities for inner divine knowledge with God.³⁷⁸ Mystic practices played a significant role in shaping the church during this period of upheaval. While church leaders wrote about limiting women's participation in official church ministry, women remained highly involved in the church.

Church Leaders

Martin Luther (1483 – 1546) was a German reformer who declared that human reason is a God-given ability which distinguishes men and women from animals.³⁷⁹ He spent much of his time studying and translating the Scriptures. In his early years as a monk, he experienced intense spiritual struggles, eventually causing him to leave the

³⁷⁷ David F. Wright, "Reformation, Protestant," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 995.

³⁷⁸ Albert Henry Newman, *A Manual of Church History Vol. II* (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1972), 4-5.

³⁷⁹ Norman L. Geisler, *Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 432.

Catholic tradition. A definitive moment came in October 1517, when he posted his *Ninety-five Theses*, thereby jumpstarting the Reformation.³⁸⁰

Luther revered women and defended women from misogynists. He believed that Adam and Eve were created as complete equals, but Eve's disobedience resulted in men becoming slightly elevated. Luther taught women to dress modestly and believed it was good for women to have children. Luther wrote the first significant commentary on 1 Timothy since John Chrysostom's. He taught that 1 Timothy 2:11 applied to churches of his day—that is, women should remain hearers, not teachers. Luther further taught that women should not serve as spokespersons within the church, nor should they teach or pray in public. He recognized that Paul forbade women to have authority over men and reasoned that God ordained men to lead. Luther also questioned Satan's strategy in the fall, noting that Satan did not attack Adam, but specifically chose to deceive Eve.³⁸¹

John Calvin (1509 – 1564) became a protestant Christian when living in Bourges. In 1541, he traveled to Geneva where he spent the rest of his life as a major leader of the Reformed Church. He spent much of his time preaching, teaching, and writing. Calvin wrote commentaries on twenty-three Old Testament books and every New Testament book, except Revelation.³⁸²

Calvin interpreted 1 Timothy 2 as a description of church life. He explained that Paul did not permit women to speak or teach publicly, but that they should learn quietly

³⁸⁰ Rudolph W. Heinze, "Luther, Martin," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 718.

³⁸¹ Doriani, *Interpretation*, 237-238.

³⁸² William Stanford Reid, "Calvin, John," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter A. Elwell (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 200-201.

in the church. Calvin also believed that teaching implies rank of power and authority. Calvin pointed to the fact that Deborah, Philip's daughters, Abigail, and other female prophets never held the office to speak in the assembly. He also echoed Paul's two primary rationales presented in 1 Timothy regarding women in ministry: 1) God enacted this law at the beginning of creation; 2) God inflicted it as a punishment for Eve's sin.³⁸³

Women of the Church

During the Reformation, women played an important role within the church, mostly in ways that did not involve preaching or teaching. There are many examples of women working alongside men to reach local communities. Argula von Grumbach, a Lutheran noblewoman, was the first known woman to use the printing press to circulate religious writings by Lutheran women. Beyond printing, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, and Reformed women wrote extensively during the 1500s.³⁸⁴

Teresa of Avila (1515 – 1582) entered the Carmelite convent at Avila as a young woman. She began to experience visions and ecstasies and produced several writings, including *Life*, where she describes her visions and discusses the centrality of prayer, and *Foundations* which describes her role in founding several convents. Her most influential writings may be *Way of Perfection*, which teaches the virtues of religious, monastic life, and *Interior Castle*, in which she discusses the spiritual life. In all, she wrote thirty-one poems and 458 letters.³⁸⁵ She was considered a major counter-reformation figure and

³⁸³ Doriani, *Interpretation*, 239-243.

³⁸⁴ Joy A. Schroeder, "Did Sixteenth-century Lutheran Women Have a Reformation?" *Currents in Theology and Mission* 46 (2019): 9.

³⁸⁵ Weinrich, *History*, 268.

opposed “Lutheran” expansion into Spain, yet she also believed that changes needed to be made within the Catholic church; she used her platform to spur change.³⁸⁶

Women in German-speaking areas received opportunities to read Scripture translated by Luther instead of the German Bibles, which were translations of the Latin Vulgate.³⁸⁷ Olimpia Morata (1526 – 1555) was an Italian believer who wrote on the Christian faith. Likewise, Marie Dentiere (1495 - 1561) from Geneva ministered to those around her. Lady Elisabeth von Braunschweig (1510 – 1558), the duchess of Luneburg and Calenburg, wrote about the Lutheran faith. As a governmental ruler, she introduced the Augsburg Confession (1530) to her people, and she later sponsored a Lutheran church. Jeanne d’Albret, Marguerite de Navarre, and Renee of France in Ferrara were French women known for being public supporters of Calvin’s reforms. Argula von Grumbach (c.1492 – c. 1563) from Bavaria initiated a public letter campaign against the Catholic faculty at Ingolstadt University, who accused a young student of Lutheran heresy. Katharina Schutz Zell (1498 – 1562) was a pastor’s wife from Strasbourg who developed a distinct theological voice in her writings, becoming one of the most published women in her time.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁶ Alisa Joanne Tigchelaar, “The Theology of Vocation in Teresa of Avila’s Reformed Convent Through the Lens of ‘Two Very Wicked Heretics,’” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 54 (2019): 186-209.

³⁸⁷ Schroeder, *Reformation*, 9-10.

³⁸⁸ Kirsi Stjerna, “Reformation Revisited: Women’s Voices in the Reformation,” *The Ecumenical Review* 69 (2017): 204-208.

The Puritans

When the Church of England broke away from Catholicism, Queen Elizabeth satisfied the majority of the English people by combining Catholic and Protestant elements into the one church, while maintaining its separation from Rome. The Puritan Movement rose up in response to Queen Elizabeth's "middle way," believing that the church should be completely separate from the state. Many of these Puritans were persecuted for their views and some even set sail for America in 1620 on the *Mayflower* to settle in Plymouth Colony.³⁸⁹

The English Puritans (1560 – 1645) believed men and women had different roles in the church and the home. Puritans addressed women directly, assumed women had the competency to judge righteously, and respected women's consciences. William Gouge, a puritan leader, used Paul's words in 1 Timothy 2 to state that women should be slow to speak not only in the church, but in the home as well. Women, said Gouge, were to teach others under the leadership of the husband, but never in the assembly of believers. Robert Bolton described the husband as the head and argued that husbands must always lead. William Whately believed men should lead simply because they are physically stronger. John Winthrop, governor of Massachusetts and a prominent Puritan, reasoned that several things were proper for men but not women. William Perkins taught that men should lead in the family, church, and commonwealth. Thomas Gataker argued that men should lead within the church based on order, nature, and history.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁹ Allison, *Theology*, 605.

³⁹⁰ Doriani, *Interpretation*, 244-246.

The Puritans refined complementarianism in many important ways. They took pride in granting women substantial freedom within the home and the church. They promoted mutual respect between men and women while holding that men were to lead in the family and the church.

Conclusion on the Reformation

Much like the early church and the middle ages, women become further involved in the church during the Reformation. Women's involvement generally did not include being elders or leading from the pastorate, however. Very rarely were women teaching men in the church, but this did not stop them from serving in various ways. The major church leaders of the Reformation recognized God's limitations on women's leadership, but still valued and revered women. Women continued to learn and grow in their understanding of Scripture, wrote about their Christian faith, used their power and status to bring the gospel to new areas, supported the church, and assisted in bringing reform to the church as a whole.

The Modern Era

As the Reformation came to a close, new and diverse denominations emerged. Catholic, Anglican, Lutheran, and Reformed churches, as well as the Anabaptists, migrated to North America. Many people from these denominations fled their homes in Europe and the persecution from other denominations. This diverse migrant of Christians brought with it differing interpretations of Scripture's commands on women's roles in the church and in the home.

Church Leaders

Throughout the early part of the modern era, the vast majority of church leaders interpreted Paul's teachings to mean that only men were fit for the roles of elder, pastor, preacher, or teacher. Most of these male church leaders still valued ministry work done by women, and women continued to play a vital role in the church. As the global church grew, so also did the number of women participating in ministry.

Jonathan Edwards (1703 – 1758) is arguably the greatest theological mind of the last 500 years.³⁹¹ He taught four theological portraits for a pastor and church leaders. He taught that a pastor ought to be united to his congregation; a pastor ought to be a shining light in a world of darkness; preachers should suffer, sacrifice, and lead souls to salvation; last, he explained that as Christ is the final judge, so ministers and their congregations will one day be called together before the judgement seat of Christ to receive their eternal reward.³⁹²

Edwards acknowledged the value of women in church and believed they had an important part to play in Christianity:

‘Tis beautiful for persons when they are at prayer... to make God only their fear... and to be wholly forgetful that men are present... And ‘tis beautiful for a minister, when he speaks in the name of the Lord of hosts... to put off all fear of men. And ‘tis beautiful for private Christians, thought they are women and children to be bold in professing the faith of Christ... and in owning God's hand in the work of His power and grace, without any fear of men, though they be reproached as fools and madmen... But for private Christians, women and others, to instruct, rebuke, and exhort, with a like sort of boldness as becomes a minister when

³⁹¹ Gerald R. McDermott, “Jonathan Edwards and God's Inner Life: A Response to Kyle Strobel,” *Themelios* 39 (2014): 242.

³⁹² Robert W. Caldwell, “The Ministerial Ideal in the Ordination Sermons of Jonathan Edwards: Four Theological Portraits,” *Themelios* 38 (2013): 390.

preaching, is not beautiful. (Jonathan Edwards: *The Great Awakening*)³⁹³

Edwards firmly believed that the office of pastor or elder should be held by men. Private Christians, said Edwards, should not rebuke and exhort others with the likeness of a minister. He calls out women specifically.

John Wesley (1703 – 1791) was born into a Puritan family. His mother, Susanna, was the daughter of a prominent Puritan preacher. When John's father was away, she began holding evening bible studies for her children and family in her kitchen. Neighbors often came to hear her as well.³⁹⁴

As Wesley grew older, he became a renowned revivalist preacher, one who was known to ground his teachings in Scripture.³⁹⁵ Regarding women ministering within the church, he believed 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Corinthians 14 taught that women should not teach in public “unless they are under an extraordinary impulse of the Spirit.” Under normal circumstances, then, Wesley, by citing 1 Timothy 2, argued that women should refrain from public teaching as they are subordinate to man. Wesley did occasionally allow a woman to say a few words during church gatherings to both men and women, but teachings were always given by men.³⁹⁶

³⁹³ Doriani, *Interpretation*, 247-248.

³⁹⁴ Harold Wells, “John Wesley (1703- 1791) and the Call to a Holy Life,” *Touchstone* 34 (2016): 51-52.

³⁹⁵ Bernie Van de Walle, “Crafted and Co-opted: The Early Christian and Missionary Alliances’s Selective and Self-serving Use of the Life and Writings of John Wesley,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 53 (2018): 128.

³⁹⁶ Doriani, *Interpretation*, 247.

Charles Hodge (1797 – 1878), a Princeton Theological Seminary professor, was an influential leader within the church.³⁹⁷ He sought to dignify women through his teachings, arguing that, though women were subject to men in the church, they were in no ways inferior. To illustrate his belief, he often used the reality of Jesus being subject to God the Father.³⁹⁸

Likewise, Patrick Fairbairn (1838 – 1912) taught that women should be allowed to learn since they too have the rational power of thought. He believed Paul's teachings only applied to instances within the church. Fairbairn reasoned that women could teach informally, but they could not teach at church gatherings.³⁹⁹

As culture shifted and feminism began to take hold, many church leaders resisted allowing women to preach and teach while remaining supportive of women's rights in general. In the 1830s, several church groups issued pastoral letters concerning, "the mistaken conduct of those who encourage females to bear an obtrusive and ostentatious part in measures of reform, and countenance any of that sex who so far forget themselves as to itinerate in the character of public lecturers and teachers" (*The General Association of Massachusetts to the Churches Under Their Care*).⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁷ Darrell Jodock, "Charles Hodge Revisited: A Critical Appraisal of His Life and Work," *Theology Today* (2004): 598.

³⁹⁸ Doriani, *Interpretation*, 255-256.

³⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 253.

⁴⁰⁰ Barbara Brown Zikmund, "The Struggle for the Right to Preach," in *Women and Religion in America Vol 1: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether and Rosemary Skinner Keller (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 194.

Feminism in the Church

Throughout the modern era, most Evangelical leaders have agreed that men were designed to lead local congregation. However, as the women's rights and feminist movements stressed the complete equality of genders—which nearly all Evangelical leaders support—some church leaders and church bodies began to push back against traditional and biblical roles. In Western churches, women began pursuing pastoral roles and seeking denominational ordination.

Margaret Fell was the first woman to hold a pastoral position in a Quaker church in 1667.⁴⁰¹ She published a tract that defended women as the mouthpieces of God along with men.⁴⁰² Anne Hutchinson lived in colonial New England and was considered a leader within the Puritan church. Though she was not a minister, she had a following of both men and women.⁴⁰³

Phoebe Palmer was a Methodist Holiness evangelist in the 1840s. Ruth Knapp Bixby, a Free Will Baptist, was licensed to preach in 1846. Antoinette Brown, an African-American, was one of the first women to be ordained in 1853. Mary Baker Eddy built a cult following around her views on science and health. Unfortunately, many men and women followed her and her adherents persist to this day. Catherine Mumford Booth published an article on female teaching within the church. In it, she points to the Old and New Testament's presentation of women using their spiritual gifts. Mary C. Jones was

⁴⁰¹ Grudem, *Feminism*, 216.

⁴⁰² Claire Jowitt, "'Inward' and 'Outward' Jews: Margaret Fell, Circumcision, and Women's Preaching," *Reformation* 4 (1999): 161.

⁴⁰³ Marilyn J. Westerkamp, "Anne Hutchinson, Sectarian Mysticism, and the Puritan Order," *Church History* 59 (1990): 482-483.

ordained as a Baptist preacher in 1882.⁴⁰⁴ In 1913, Aimee Semple McPherson began her preaching ministry and by the end of the decade had become one of the most popular evangelists in the country.⁴⁰⁵ McPherson exploited the methods of Hollywood and the news media throughout the 1920s and 1930s.⁴⁰⁶

The Pentecostal movement has greatly influenced the ideas and roles of women in ministry. In fact, the movement was started by a woman, Miss Agnes Ozman. One day, Ozman began speaking in Mandarin before a halo surrounded her head and face. After this experience, she claimed that she could write in other languages. Charles Fox Parham reasoned that she had been baptized with the Holy Ghost and believed that it should be an integral part of Christian worship. This teaching served as the basis for the Azusa Street Revival.⁴⁰⁷ Since then, the Pentecostal movement has widely held that women have the gift of teaching and should teach alongside men.

In the last eighty years, the issue of women preaching and teaching within the church has been hotly debated in almost every denomination. In 1983, the Code of Canon Law allowed women altar servers, lectors, and ministers of the Eucharist.⁴⁰⁸ Reverend Barbara C. Harris was consecrated a bishop of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of

⁴⁰⁴ Elizabeth Wilcoxson, "A.J. Gordon and the Ministry of Women," *American Baptist Quarterly* 34 (2015): 163-175.

⁴⁰⁵ C. Douglas Weaver, "McPhersonism? Aimee Semple McPherson and Her Baptist Opponents (and Supporters)" *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 42 (2015): 127-142.

⁴⁰⁶ Donna E. Ray, "Aimee Semple McPherson and Her Seriously Exciting Gospel," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 19 (2010): 155-169.

⁴⁰⁷ Ruth A. Tucker and Walter Liefeld, *Daughters of the Church: Women and Ministry from New Testament Times to the Present* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987), 359-360.

⁴⁰⁸ Zagano, *Women*, 608.

Massachusetts in 1989, thus becoming the first female bishop in the history of Anglicanism.⁴⁰⁹

Over the last century, feminism has greatly impacted Western society, and much for the better. Not only have women begun preaching and teaching within worship services in many denominations, but women in general have been able to contribute much to the church as a whole. Whether one holds to a patriarchal, complementarian, partial egalitarian, full egalitarian, or feminist view, it is important to note the contributions that women have made to the modern church. Contributing within the church has become easier for women as they have strived for increased opportunity to contribute to society.

Contributions of Women

Lucy Hutchinson (1620 – 1681) is remembered as a poetess and for her many writings on Christian doctrine.⁴¹⁰ Madame Jeanne Guyon (1648 – 1717) was known for her role in the Quietist controversy in France. Her mystical work, *Torrents*, was widely circulated and had a significant impact on eighteenth-century religion in Europe.⁴¹¹ She wrote more than forty books, including a multi-volume commentary on Scripture.⁴¹²

⁴⁰⁹ Paige Patterson, “The Meaning of Authority in the Local Church,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway, 2006), 248.

⁴¹⁰ Christopher S. Northcott, “The Puritan Epic Poetess: Why Christians Should Read Lucy Hutchinson’s *Order and Disorder*,” *Stimulus* 25 (2018): 24-25.

⁴¹¹ Patricia A. Ward, “Madame Guyon and Experiential Theology in America,” *Church History* 67 (1998): 484.

⁴¹² Doriani, *Interpretation*, 269.

During the colonial period, female church members vastly outnumbered males. Revivals were extremely successful in reaching men, but women often outnumbered men in attendance. During the First Great Awakening (1739 – 1743) in Connecticut, women constituted 56% of new membership.⁴¹³

For the first part of the nineteenth century, women actively participated in religious meetings by serving as deaconesses.⁴¹⁴ Between 1861 and 1894, women organized foreign missionary societies solely for women missionaries in thirty-three denominations, as well as home missionary societies in seventeen denominations.⁴¹⁵

Many women supported the notion that only men should pursue clergy roles. Margaret R. Seebach wrote “Shall Women Preach?” (Lutheran Quarterly, Oct. 1903), in which she argued that women shouldn’t teach men because of practical obstacles and innate differences between men and women. Seebach describes church services where women teach children, pray in prayer meetings, and serve as laypeople. She argues that the Sabbath ministrations should be kept for those who have received training. Seebach also reasons that women should not be educated for clergy work because it would be impossible for a woman to balance home duties with the work of a pastor and preacher. In her mind, a woman’s moral influence would be diminished by neglecting home and

⁴¹³ Martha Tomhave Blauvelt, “Women and Revivalsim,” in *Women and Religion in America Vol 1: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether and Rosemary Skinner Keller (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 2.

⁴¹⁴ Zikmund, *Struggle*, 194.

⁴¹⁵ Rosemary Skinner Keller, “Lay Women in the Protestant Tradition,” in *Women and Religion in America Vol. 1: The Nineteenth Century*, ed. Rosemary Radford Ruether and Rosemary Skinner Keller (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 242.

children, which would inevitably happen because a pastor's role "occup[ies] the whole time of a man who adopts it."⁴¹⁶

Ashbel Green believed that women played a significant role in supporting missions and other benevolent causes. Green travelled and spoke at various women's organizations and events during the first half of the nineteenth-century. She often stated that women were not to preach or teach to public Christian assemblies. Green also believed that women should not prophesy in public, believing that gift to have ceased in ancient times.⁴¹⁷

Conclusion on the Modern Era

For the vast majority of the modern era, the church has considered men as the only people qualified to fill top leadership roles in the church and home. Over the last eighty years, however, the western church has begun to shift its view of this issue. The reason for this shift is tied to our changing culture. Women are now perceived as complete equals to men—this is a good thing! The Bible clearly teaches that men and women are equal in value and worth.

As women were treated more and more as equals, associated ideas took hold in the church, leading to further change. These changes have been both good and bad. Denominations that once believed that only men were called to the pastorate began to question this traditional belief. The Quakers, Universalists, Unitarians, and

⁴¹⁶ Zikmund, *Struggle*, 194.

⁴¹⁷ James H. Moorhead, "Slavery, Race, and Gender at Princeton Seminary: The Pre-Civil War Era," *Theology Today* 69 (2012): 286.

Congregationalists began allowing women to teach and preach, and soon after the same development occurred in Methodist, Presbyterian, Lutheran, and Episcopalian congregations.⁴¹⁸

Conclusion on the Historical Approach to Women in Ministry

We are not the first believers to be confronted with the issue of women working in ministry. As seen in church history, this subject has been around for a long time, although it seems to be much more popular during our current day. Our doctrines and beliefs should not be defined by early church fathers or church history in and of themselves. All believers should use Scripture to form their theology, but it is important to take church history into consideration.

Most early church fathers, medieval church leaders, leaders in the Reformation, and pastors during the modern era have held similar conclusions about women serving in ministry. It is heartening to study these leaders, seeing how the vast majority recognized the equal value of their sisters in Christ.

Women played prominent roles as deaconesses within the early church along with the opportunity of being a “widow.” They learned the Scriptures, wrote, and supported the church in various ways. Many women were even martyred for their faith. Wayne Grudem summarizes:

For the first eighteen hundred years of the history of the church, women played influential roles in evangelism, prayer, ministries of mercy, writing, financial support, political influence, private exhortation and encouragement and counsel, and teaching of women and children. But they never became pastors of churches,

⁴¹⁸ Zikmund, *Struggle*, 193.

and rarely did they speak or teach publicly in mixed assemblies of men and women.⁴¹⁹

Mysticism had a significant impact on the church, causing many women to teach within the church and base their messages on claims that they had received direct revelation from God. As a result of the Mysticism movement, many circles of women questioned Paul's commands for church service in 1 Timothy 2. Still, the majority of women did not teach or preach, maintaining traditional interpretations of Paul's commands.

During the Reformation, women contributed greatly to the development and spread of ideas, although most women did not push full feminist ideals. Since the mid-1600's, women gradually pursued greater leadership within the church, including opportunities to preach and teach. Feminism as a movement has led to many positive changes, but it has also sought to redefine Scripture, particularly Paul's words. Its affirmation of women's mental and spiritual capacities, while an overall good, has caused some to deviate from a traditional reading of Scripture.⁴²⁰ Scholar D. Duren considered the growing number of women who desired preach and teach within religious meetings, writing:

...The Jewish religion raised the sex (women) far above her rank among the Gentiles; the Christian religion has greatly elevated her. But Christianity has not changed her position in society. The Scriptures were definitely settle the place of woman, and give reasons for it; and we can plainly discern the propriety of the place assigner her... We find at the present time the "strong-minded" leaving the teachings of Scripture, and trying to reason out the duty and mission of woman; and they are quite confused by the acknowledged fact that she is the equal to man, and the

⁴¹⁹ Grudem, *Feminism*, 460.

⁴²⁰ Doriani, *Interpretation*, 246.

unquestionable fact also that she is differently organized. The inspired Word teaches us; and in both the Jewish and Christian church of the Scriptures we find her filling beautifully her proper sphere; and we find few, yet sufficient, regulations and admonitions in regard to her duties and work. (*Congregational Review*, Jan. 1868)⁴²¹

Duren reminds us that it is good to acknowledge the fact that women are equal to men, but it is also important to understand that men and women are created differently.

Women have been fulfilling God-given work in an awesome and biblical way since the beginning of the church.

THE CHARIS FELLOWSHIP

Grace Community Church in Fremont, Ohio is a member of the Charis Fellowship (formerly Grace Brethren Fellowship) and can trace its ties to this network of churches since its conception. In 1939, there was a split in the Brethren church between the Ashland Brethren and the Grace Brethren. This split also took place within the Brethren church in Fremont, thus leading to the formation of a new Grace Brethren congregation.⁴²²

The Grace Brethren Fellowship has had many influential leaders. Alva J. McClain, Herman A. Hoyt, and Homer A. Kent are examples of leaders who helped start Grace Theological Seminary and the new Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches.⁴²³

⁴²¹ Zikmund, *Struggle*, 194.

⁴²² Ray I. Feather, "Fremont, OH, Grace Brethren Church," in *The Brethren Encyclopedia Vol. I*, ed. Donald F. Durnbaugh (Philadelphia: The Brethren Encyclopedia, 1983), 515.

⁴²³ David R. Plaster and Homer A. Kent, *Finding Our Focus: A History of the Grace Brethren Church* (Winona Lake: BMH, 2003), 110-111.

Kent's hope was that the fellowship would always be a faithful contender for "the faith once for all delivered unto the saints."⁴²⁴

Leadership within the fellowship has long held the idea of equal, yet distinct leadership roles for men and women within the church. In 1975, Harold Etling, a prominent leader within the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches, published a book on the brethren beliefs and practices. He describes the church as essentially a school where Christ is the teacher, the Holy Spirit is the interpreter, the Bible the textbook, and a man is a pastor or shepherd.⁴²⁵

The Charis Fellowship has had its share of conflicts, many centered around theological disagreements. For example, in 1992 the Conservative Grace Brethren churches left the fellowship over disagreements on how to administer ordinances.⁴²⁶ The issue of women in ministry has not constituted a debated topic within the Charis Fellowship, until recently.

The Charis Fellowship's current position on the role of eldership states:

We affirm that men and women are both created in the image of God, are equal in value and personhood and are designed to be inter-dependent in life and ministry within the local church. We believe that the leadership position in our local churches corresponding to the biblical role of elder/overseer/pastor is reserved for men who meet biblical qualifications.⁴²⁷

⁴²⁴ Homer A. Kent Sr., *250 Years... Conquering Frontiers* (Winona Lake: BMH, 1958), 214-215.

⁴²⁵ Harold H. Etling, *Our Heritage: Brethren Beliefs and Practices* (Winona Lake: BMH, 1975), 40-41.

⁴²⁶ Todd Scholes, *Restoring the Household: The Quest of the Grace Brethren Church* (Winona Lake: BMH, 2008), 205-218.

⁴²⁷ Found at: <https://charisfellowship.us/page/positionstatements?key=positionstatements>

This statement identifies the role of elder, overseer, and pastor; but it does not discuss the functions of the elder, overseer, or pastor—such as preaching and teaching. This position is set to expire in August 2023.

CHAPTER 4

EVALUATION STRATEGY AND RESULTS

Social research was a key component of this project. A primary goal of this project was to produce a policy regarding women in ministry for Grace Community Church in Fremont, Ohio, as well as a curriculum for biblical instruction on this topic. I have used a mixed methods approach in my research. This approach utilizes both quantitative and qualitative data, including stories and personal experiences. The mixed methods approach provides both a better understanding of the research problem as well as substantiated conclusions to the question of women's roles within the church.⁴²⁸

SURVEY STRATEGY

Data gathered for this project came primarily through the implementation of surveys. Two different surveys were sent to two distinct groups of people. The goal of both surveys was to explore the values and beliefs regarding women's roles within the church. One survey was used to discover these values and beliefs within the Charis Fellowship, a network of churches my local church belongs to and partners with. The second survey was sent to church members within my local congregation.

My reasoning for researching the opinions of church leaders within our fellowship is twofold. One, I believe it is a biblical principle to seek advice of fellow leaders. Solomon reminds us that two are better than one, and that companionship is much better

⁴²⁸ John W. Creswell, *A Concise Introduction to Mixed Methods Research* (Washington D.C.: Sage, 2015), 2.

than isolation (Ecc. 4:9-12).⁴²⁹ We are meant to do ministry together. Ministry can often be a lonely place for both men and women, but it doesn't have to be that way and frankly, it shouldn't. Our church, being a part of a network of likeminded churches, has its positives and negatives. One of the most beneficial components of the Charis Fellowship is its relationships. The second is similar—being able to dialogue with individuals who are in a similar situation.

Many leaders of the Charis Fellowship are in a position similar to mine. They are struggling to define the line regarding women's roles within the church. Some of these leaders have conducted extensive study of biblical roles of men and women. I value that wisdom and knowledge and find it useful to this project. Surveying these church leaders will help me gauge where my viewpoint stands among fellow pastors of similar churches.

Personally, this issue has come up most often when working with Charis Fellowship churches. Every year our church does ministry with these other congregations. We work alongside each other toward our common goal of reaching people for Christ. We share resources and work together to put on camps, retreats, and conferences. The information this project provides regarding the beliefs and opinions of fellow church leaders within the Charis Fellowship is helpful both for developing policy and for increasing our ability to work together as Charis Fellowship congregations.

Scripture always trumps advice from a friend. Like our use of church history in Chapter 3, I believe it is important to understand the viewpoints of my peers, but man's ideas or opinions do not constitute ultimate authority for the church. Scripture is the

⁴²⁹ Tremper Longman III, *The Book of Ecclesiastes*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 142.

number one resource when examining practices and traditions within the church.

Historical data and contemporary opinions are secondary.

A congregational survey was also used to collect data for this project. The results from this survey are helpful for understanding of where my congregation currently stands on this topic. It is crucial I understand what my own congregants believe, especially when communicating and implementing policy. Whether our congregation is in general agreement on this issue or all over the map, this information will be particularly helpful when designing and teaching curriculum.

Both surveys contained several different response formats, including dichotomous, semantic differential, cumulative response, check-box, and interval-level response formats. Given this subject's sensitivity, both surveys aimed at first building rapport between the individual completing the survey and the surveyor. For instance, the survey began with low barrier warmup questions. Furthermore, each survey was delivered via email, in which the topic and rationale were thoroughly explained.⁴³⁰

CHARIS FELLOWSHIP RESEARCH

I initially planned to gather surveys from the senior or lead pastor of each church within the Charis Fellowship. I later changed my approach and sent surveys to everyone on staff at these churches. I am still most interested in the surveys of senior and lead pastors, but gathering data from entire staffs provides more information to consider for the project.

⁴³⁰ William M.K. Trochim and James P. Donnelly, *The Research Methods Knowledge Base* (Mason: Cengage, 2008), 100-111.

Approach

The approach consisted of sending a series of emails to distribute access of the survey on an online platform called, Survey Monkey. This online platform is a widely used online service in the United States. I identified 273 individual churches and campuses of the Charis Fellowship within the United States and Canada. Of these 273 congregations, a handful were without a pastor or were new church plants meeting in apartments or coffee shops. These churches were not considered for my research.

After reducing the field from 273 to 223 churches, I researched their paid staff, by examining each church's website and consolidating emails. A few church websites required me to send a general email to the church office to retrieve staff email addresses. Responses were generally positive, and only a few smaller churches chose not to respond. Last, I used the 2019 Fellowship Handbook and found a few more email addresses. I acquired most paid staff email addresses for 220 Charis Fellowship churches.

Next, I sent an initial Pre-Notice email in which I described my project and topic. This email was completely informational and meant to help the recipient understand why they would be receiving the survey, as well as assure them of the anonymity of the survey. A few days later, I sent out a Request-to-Participate email. This email gave a link for the survey, in addition to much of the same information from the previous email. Two days later, I sent a third and final reminder email. In all, I sent emails to 552 people. A few of the email addresses were invalid. Out of the 552 people emailed, 226 completed the survey.

Results

My goal was to only survey those who were senior or lead pastors and their staff. Question five asked if the individual was currently employed by a Charis Fellowship member church. Out of the 226 individuals who completed the survey, 31 either skipped this question, or answered “No.” The results of these 31 people were not used for the project. Therefore, the total surveys counted included 195 Charis Fellowship staff.

79 people claimed to be senior or lead pastors, representing different ages and experience. The average years of experience was 20 years with most being 48 years, and the least being 8 months. These pastors lead churches of all sizes (see *Figure 1*). These 79 leaders represent 79 Charis Fellowship congregations and thousands of people. Out of 220 well established churches, 36% of senior pastors within the fellowship

Q7 What is the size of the average Sunday morning attendance at your local church?

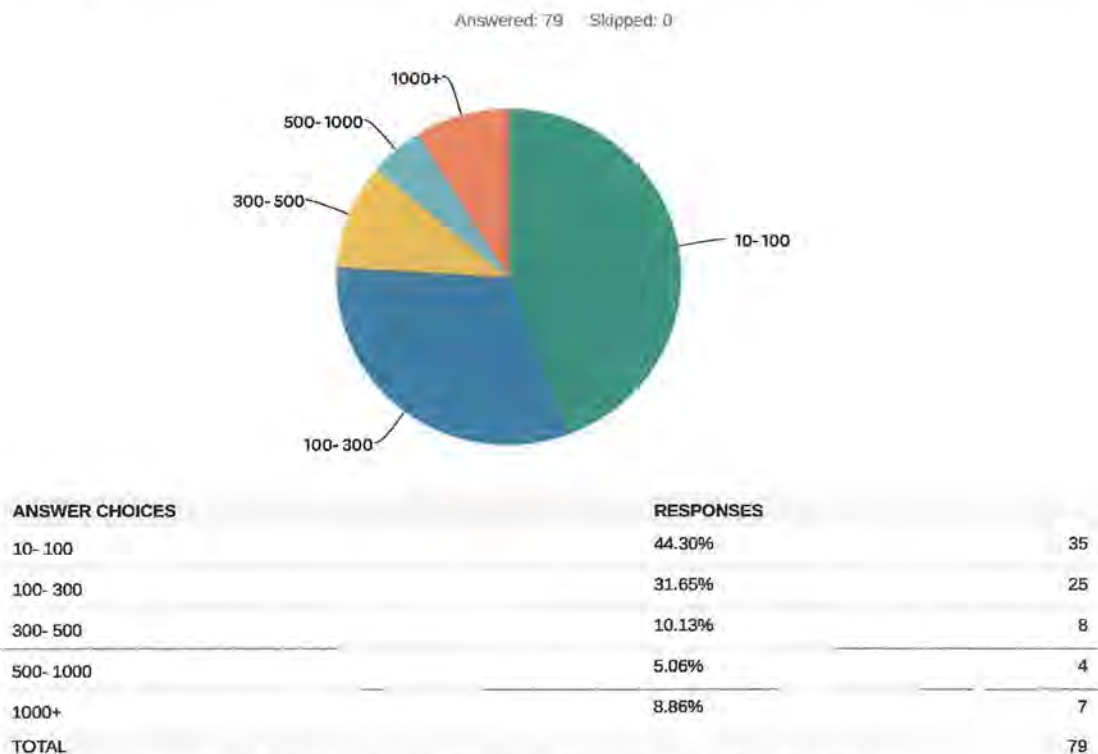


Figure 1. Average Sunday church attendance in the Charis Fellowship

responded. This does not include campus pastors which, if included, raises the participation rate to 40%.

Of the churches whose lead pastors completed the survey, 51% of them had an established policy regarding women working in ministry. Qualitative data gathered on 45 of the participants showed that essentially every church permitted only men for the office of eldership. Most of these churches claimed that eldership and pastor were basically interchangeable terms. A handful of these churches allow women to teach outside of the Sunday morning pulpit. Some of these congregations have women teaching mixed Sunday School classes and small groups.

Other pastors stated that they allow women to lead in specific ways during the main worship service, including giving announcements, leading worship, praying, reading Scripture, and sharing testimonies. One pastor stated he would allow a woman to teach if she had the approval of the elders, pastors, and her husband, and if she wore a head covering while doing it. Almost every pastor specifically said they encourage women to teach women's and children's classes.

59% of senior pastors reported having women employed on staff at their church. Of these women, none were recorded as serving as a senior pastor on staff. These women most often served as children's directors, treasurers, accountants, receptionists, bookkeepers, or administrative assistants. Several respondents stated that their church would never hire a woman for a pastor position.

On the issue of women teaching Scripture to men in a church setting. I approached this question from three varying levels of formality, asking if over the previous year women had taught 1) from the pulpit; 2) in Sunday school/adult bible

fellowship; or 3) in a small group. **Figure 2** shows that roughly 75% of respondents reported that women had never taught from the Sunday morning pulpit. One church allows women to teach during the Sunday morning worship service on a regular basis.

Q10 In the past year, have women taught Scripture to both men and women from the Sunday morning pulpit?

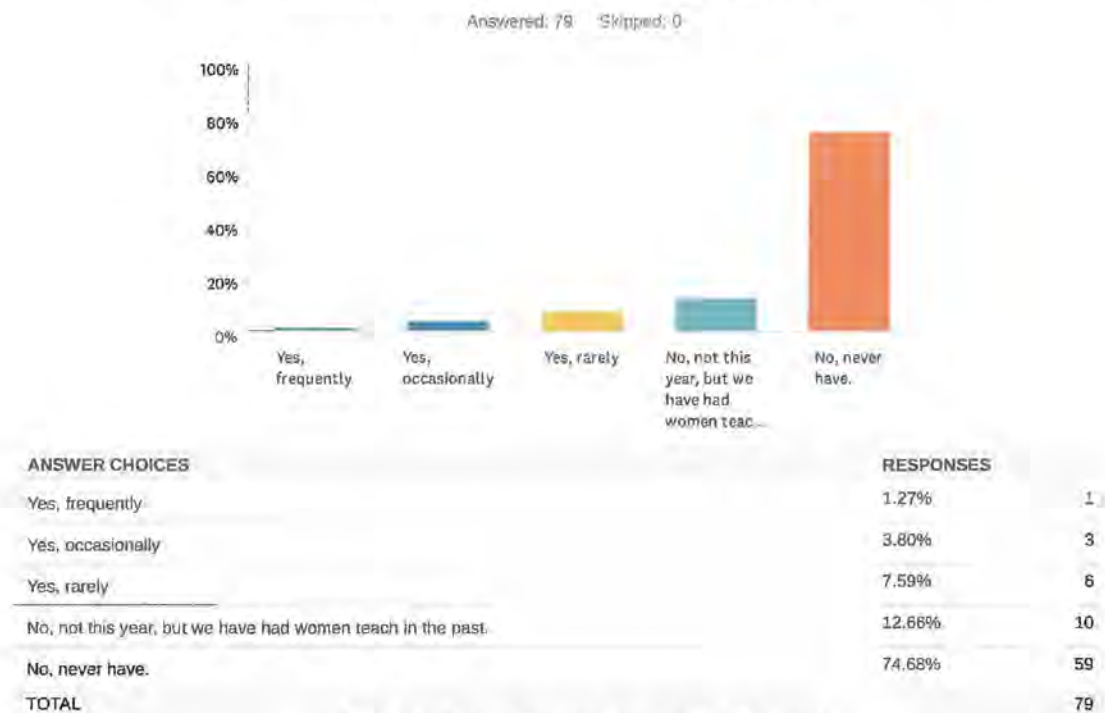


Figure 2. Women teaching from the Sunday pulpit

As teaching contexts became less formal, the percentage of churches permitting women to teach in these roles increased. For Sunday School contexts, 67% of churches had never allowed women to teach, and nearly 33% had allowed it in the past (See **Figure 3** on the next page). Likewise, the number of churches that allowed women to teach both men and women in a small group context at some point in the past year rose to 53%. Only 17% allow women to teach in this context frequently. Several pastors emailed me later explaining that they allowed women to discuss Scripture within the context of a small group but would not allow a woman to lead. They stressed that they were a part of this 53% but wanted to expound on how they came to this conclusion. By teaching, I was

suggesting a teaching or leading role within a small group rather than participants in a discussion. Thus, the results are possibly skewed towards an egalitarian stance.

Q11 In the past year, have women taught Scripture to both men and women in a Sunday School/ ABF context?

Answered: 79 Skipped: 0

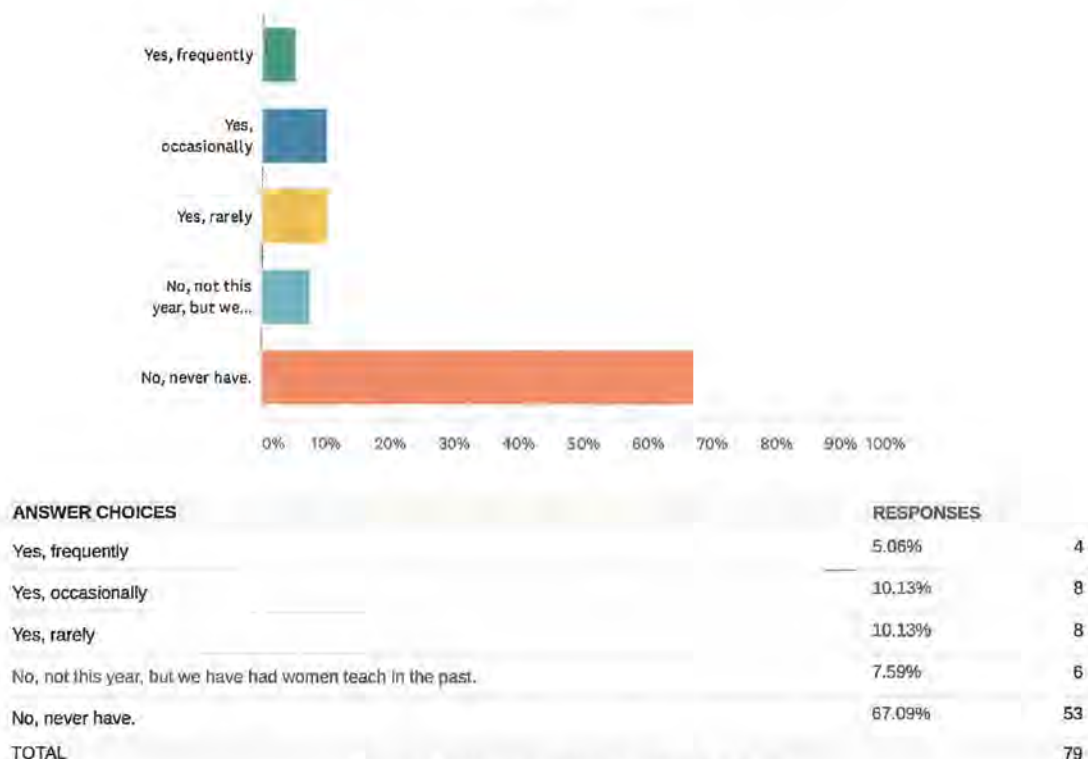


Figure 3. Women teaching in Sunday School

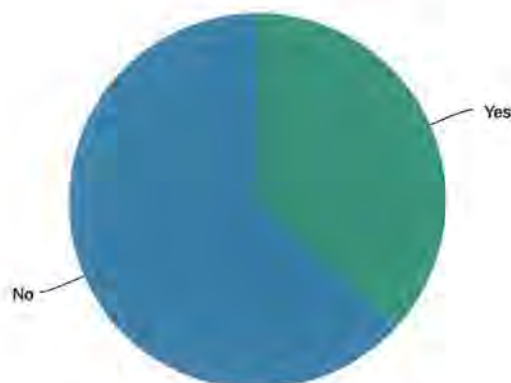
Over 92% of the senior pastors who responded held to the idea that men and women play different roles within the church. Approximately 99% stated that their churches do not believe that women should serve in the role of elder. Most (97%) of these senior and lead pastors believe that women should have some type of teaching role within the church.

One of the most important questions in the survey is whether a woman can teach men out of Scripture, and the answers will help form a policy for Grace Community Church. As shown in **Figure 4**, roughly 62% of senior and lead pastors surveyed say that

women should not teach men from Scripture in the local church. 36% of pastors, then, believe that it is reasonable.

Q17 Do you believe women should teach men out of Scripture within the local church?

Answered: 78 Skipped: 1



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	35.90%	28
No	61.54%	48
TOTAL		78

Figure 4. Women teaching men from Scripture. Lead pastors surveyed

When opening up this question to the full staff at Charis Fellowship churches, the number of people who believe only men should teach men decreases by more than 10%, though it still constitutes a higher percentage than an egalitarian stance. Please see *Figure 5* on the next page.

As far as the title of “pastor” is concerned, 14% stated that the title and office should be shared by both men and women within the church, while 82% of participants believe the title should not be given to a woman. Participants in the latter group do not necessarily believe it would be wrong to give women the title “pastor” since women do indeed shepherd. They explained, however, that our culture associates a pastor with an

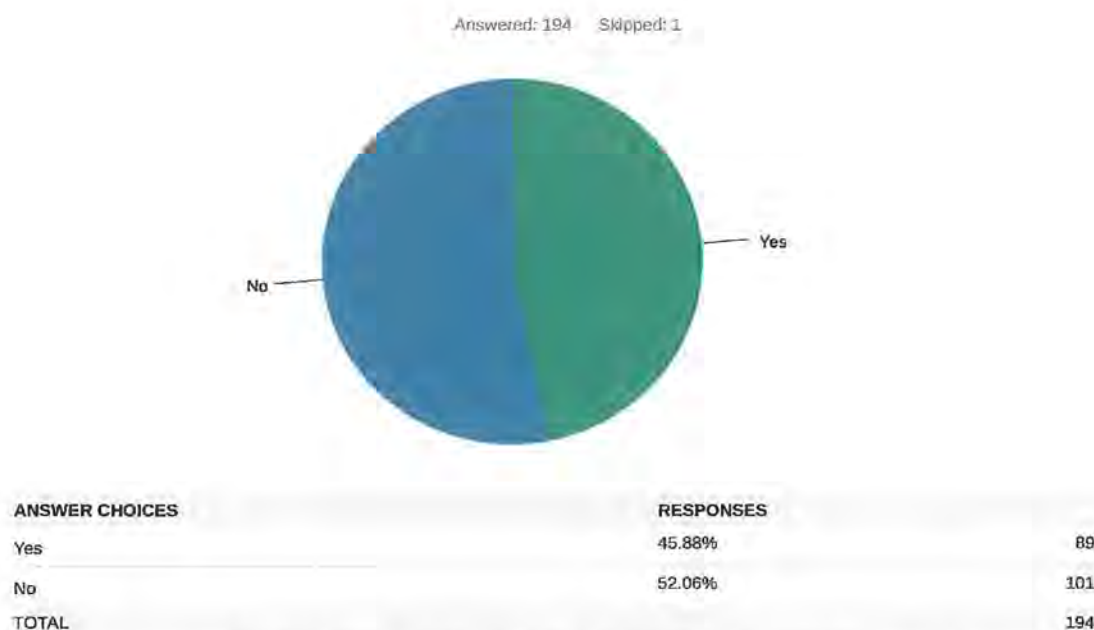


Figure 5. Women teaching men from Scripture. All staff members surveyed elder or overseer, and based on that assumption, they did not think it was wise to have a female pastor. 4% of the participants gave answers that were unclear.

Last, I gathered information to assist me in drawing a line for my local church's policy. As shown in **Figure 6** on the next page, I presented sixteen popular staff positions in the modern church and allowed each participant to "draw their own line." Each participant was asked to indicate which areas of ministry they would feel comfortable permitting a woman lead. 100% of participants were comfortable with a woman leading the children's ministry. However, not all participants were comfortable with a woman leading the women's ministry. One pastor felt comfortable with a woman leading the men's ministry.

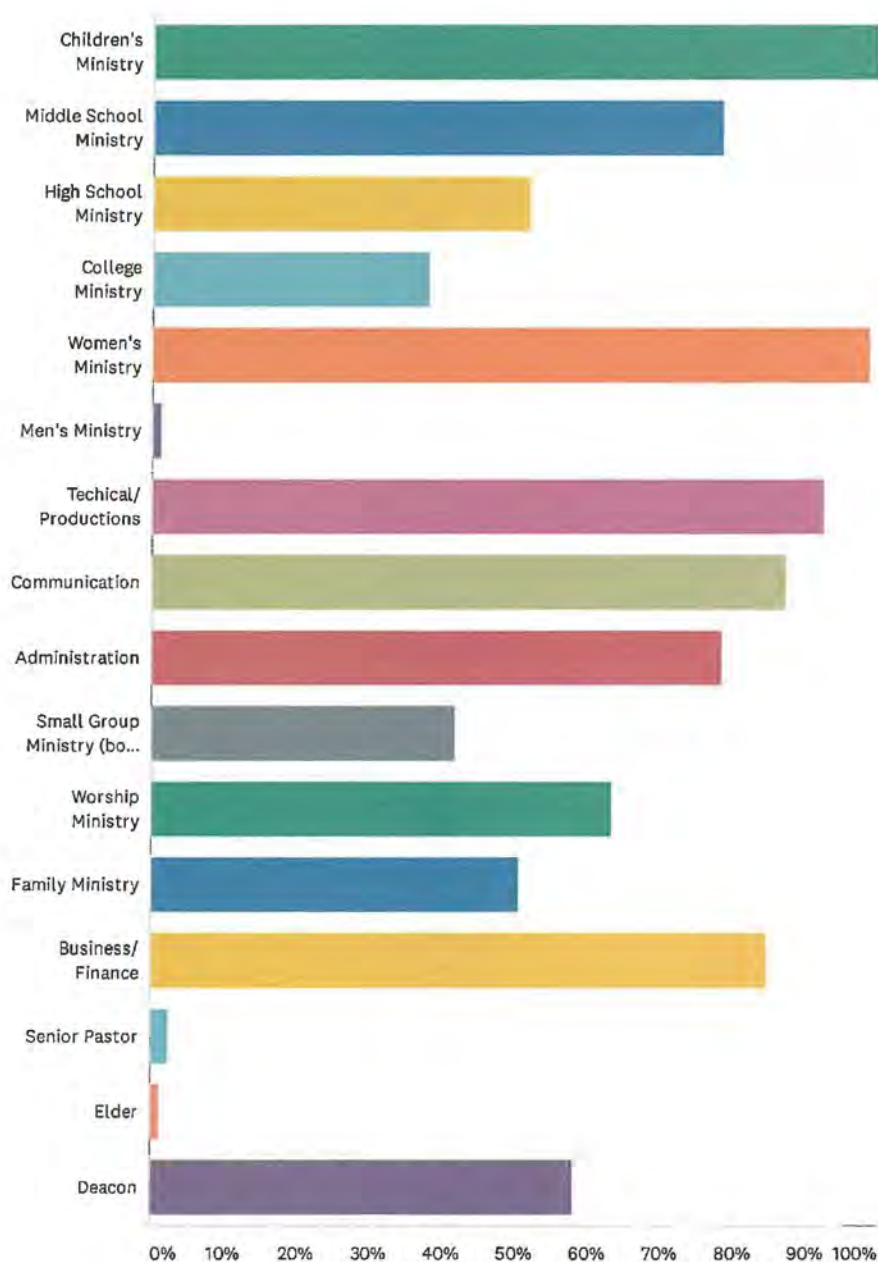


Figure 6. Drawing the line on women's roles in ministry. Senior pastors surveyed

When presenting this question to the church staff members of the Charis Fellowship, an additional two participants said they felt comfortable with a woman leading the men's ministry (see *Figure 7* on the next page). Still, 100% of participants were comfortable with women leading children's ministry, and 98% were comfortable

with women leading the women's ministry. 5% of all staff members were comfortable with a woman serving as a senior pastor or elder.

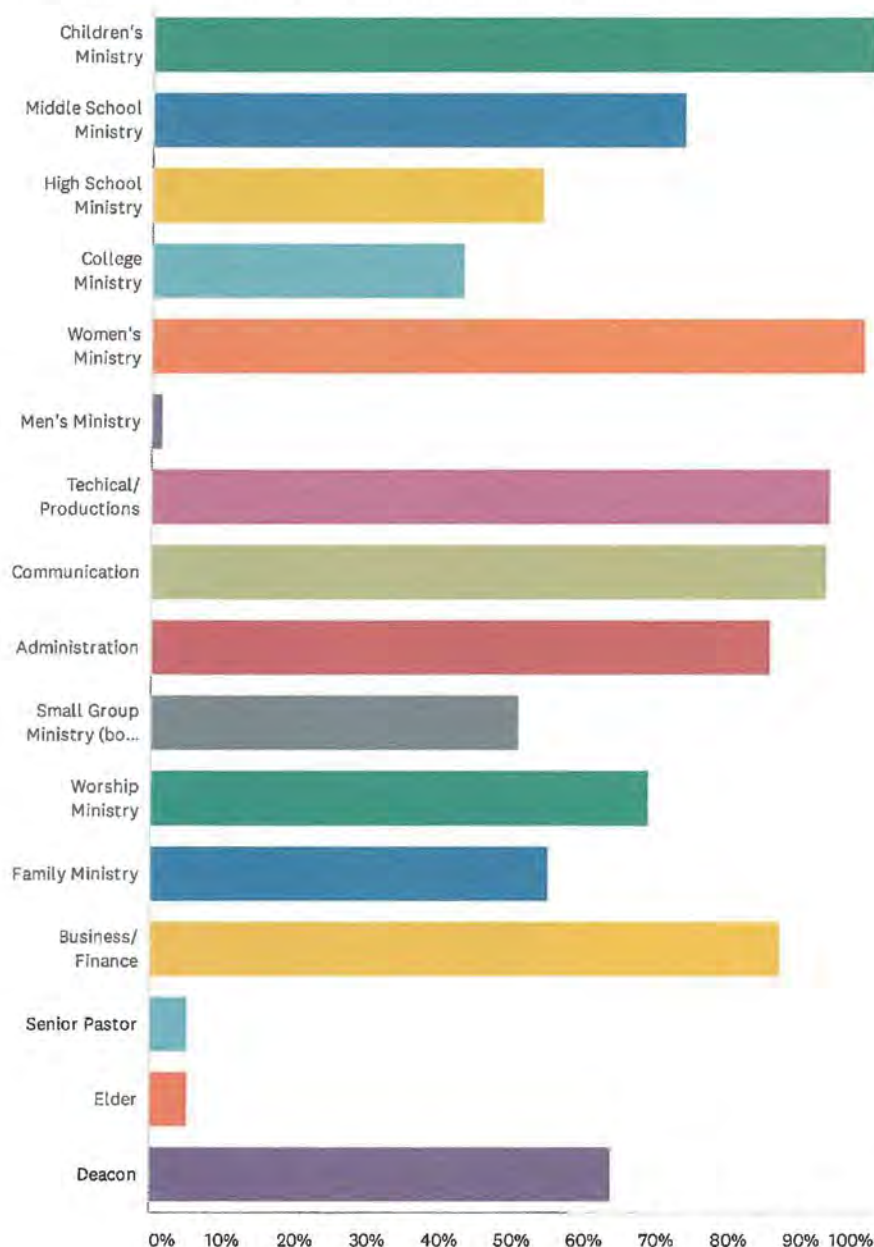


Figure 7. Drawing the line on women's roles in ministry. All staff members surveyed

Evaluation

The results of the surveys presented to senior and lead pastors within the Charis Fellowship were much more complementarian than I predicted. Only a handful of

participants allowed women to teach Scripture to both men and women in the Sunday morning worship service. Only four pastors allow it regularly, and just six pastors allow it on rare occasions. I also predicted that a high percentage of pastors would believe men and women play the same roles within the church, but only six pastors hold this stance, while 73 disagree.

Likewise, 78 pastors do not believe that women should be considered for the role of eldership or overseer, and 62% of lead pastors would not allow a woman to teach men from the Bible. I assumed that more pastors would have egalitarian views. It should be pointed out that, comparatively, few older pastors took the survey, possibly because it was offered only in digital format.

Data collected from this research was used to construct a policy for Grace Community Church in Fremont, Ohio. I've leveraged this data to gauge where the beliefs of my church are in comparison to affiliated and like-minded churches. The policy covers situations in which our church works with other Charis Fellowship churches, many of which were represented by senior pastors and staff in this survey. The policy that has emerged from this project will help guide ministry leaders from our local church when addressing this particular topic in a ministry context.

GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH MEMBERSHIP RESEARCH

My primary goal in researching members of my own congregation was to gain a better understanding of where my own congregation stands on the issue of women's roles within the church. This understanding will be essential when creating a Bible-based

curriculum on this subject. The survey results in this section reflect church members only, not regular attendees.

Approach

The approach for this group consisted of sending a series of emails to distribute access to the survey. I used the same survey platform, Survey Monkey. First, I identified members from our church's digital database, Planning Center. Limiting my research to members only still resulted in a large sample size. Our church has 1042 members, but I was only wanting to survey about 250 people. Some members had not been in attendance for a long time, and others had moved away. These "members" were immediately dropped from the list. My church's leadership and staff identified several names to drop from the survey list, given the sensitivity of the subject. Others were not sent a Request-to-Participate because of physical or mental ailments, as advised by church staff and leadership. This left me with 252 potential participants, and each of these individuals received a Request-to-Participate.

Similar to the emails I sent to the Charis Fellowship staff, I sent an initial pre-notice email to notify these individuals of the project and intended research. This first email was purely informational. A few days later, I sent a Request-to-Participate by email. This email included a survey link, as well as much of the same information from the first email. Two days later, I sent a follow-up email. I sent one more follow-up email a few days later. 176 out of 252 members responded and participated.

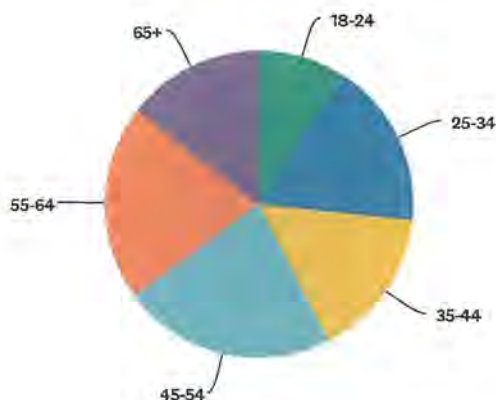
Results

Overall, and similar to the results from the Charis Fellowship, the results from my congregation were overwhelmingly complementarian. It is likely that the results would have been increasingly egalitarian if I had allowed non-members to participate. On the whole, members are more knowledgeable of the Bible and are further along in their faiths. Furthermore, membership may imply that one had been taught theology by Grace Community Church, which has a legacy of holding complementarian views.

55% of the participants were female and 45% were male. There was a fairly balanced age-range, with the smallest group being those aged 18-24 (see **Figure 8**). The largest group was those aged 45-54.

Q3 What is your age?

Answered: 165 Skipped: 11



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
18-24	9.09%	15
25-34	17.58%	29
35-44	15.76%	26
45-54	22.42%	37
55-64	20.61%	34
65+	14.55%	24
TOTAL		165

Figure 8. Ages of survey participants from Grace Community Church

Most of the participants were married (89%), while 8.5% had never been married. Only four individuals were widowed or divorced. 77% of participants had been Christians for more than 15 years; only a few participants were believers for five years or less. Nearly 50% of participants have been attending Grace Community for more than 15 years. Details provided in *Figure 9*:

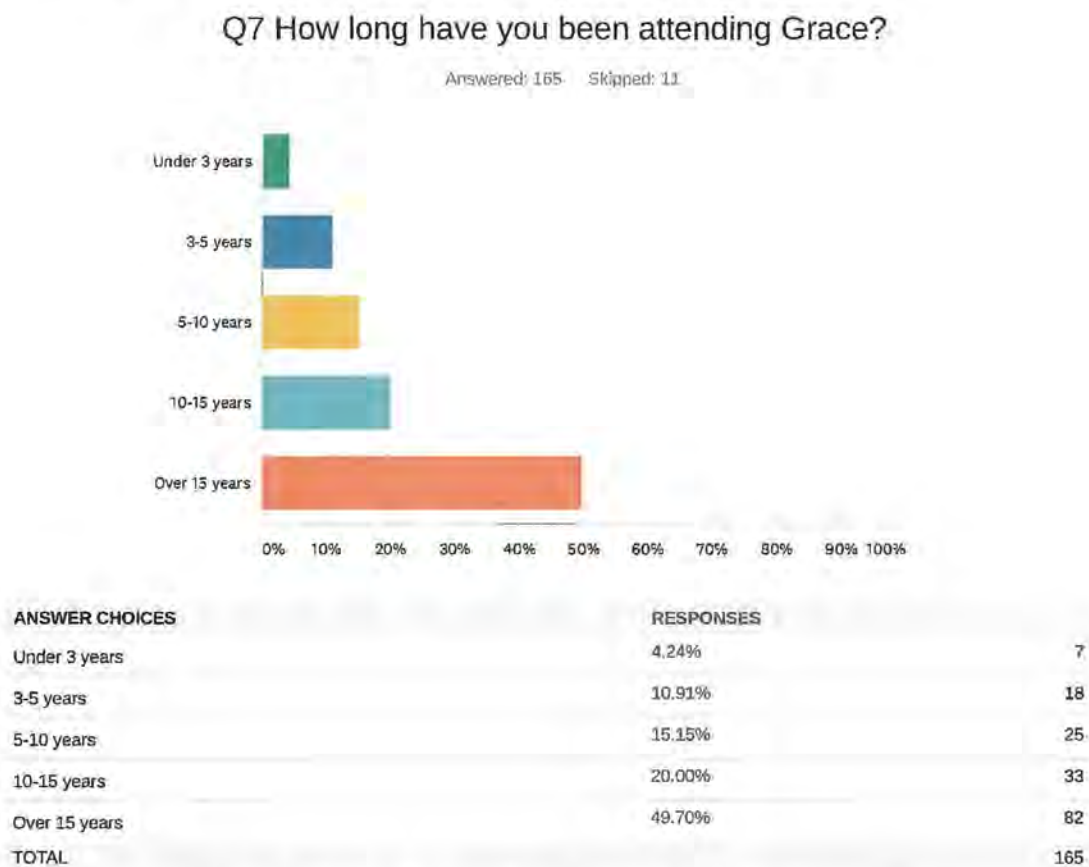


Figure 9. Number of years at Grace Community for each survey participant

These people are also highly involved in the church. Eighty-five percent of those surveyed claimed to volunteer with the church at least once each month of the year. On a scale of 1 (not involved) to 10 (involved multiple times each week), survey participants averaged a 7.9. More than 46% attend a weekly class or small group in addition to the main worship service on Sundays. Another 27% only attend a weekly class or small

group. Approximately 22% rarely attend. Only three percent claimed to have never attended one of these ministries.

A surprising number of members have attended churches that had a female pastor, as shown in **Figure 10**. Most of the churches within our community have male pastors. Knowing that half of the respondents have been attending our church for more than 15 years, it's surprising that almost 25% of respondents have had a female pastor.

Q15 Have you ever attended a church in the past that had a female pastor?

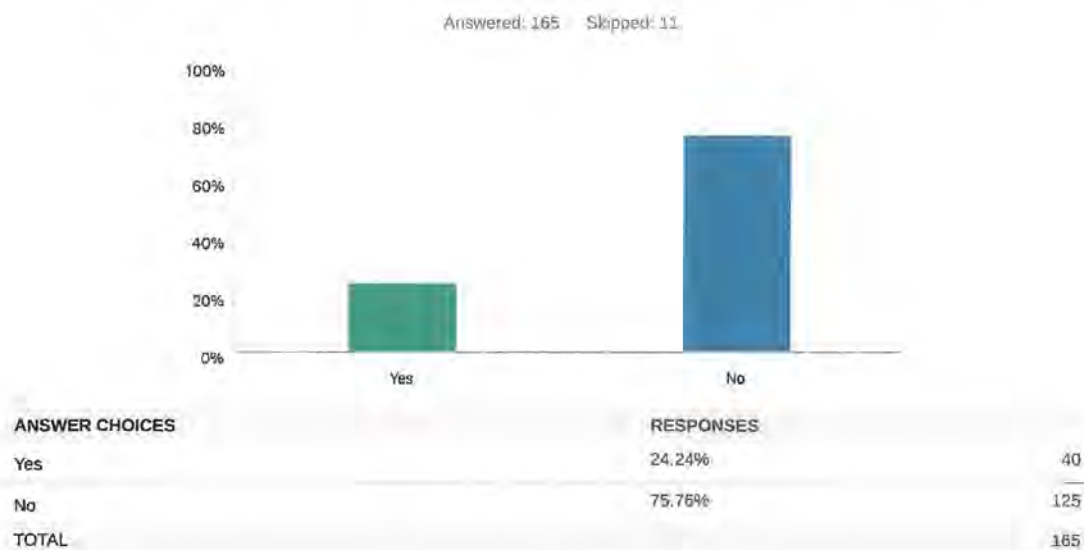


Figure 10. Participants' attendance at churches with female pastors

The most important questions dealt with ministry roles. When asked if men and women should play the same roles within the church, over 83% somewhat or strongly disagreed. Nearly 38% of participants believed that both men and women should not serve as deacons together. It is likely that these people would argue that women shouldn't serve as deacons. Given that our church allows the office of deaconess for women, almost 38% of respondents disagree with our church's practice of permitting deaconesses. For clearer results, the question should not have included a reference to men.

As detailed in **Figure 11**, when asked whether a woman should teach men from the Bible within the church, almost 83% said no. This was higher than expected.

Q21 Do you believe women should teach men from the Bible within the church?

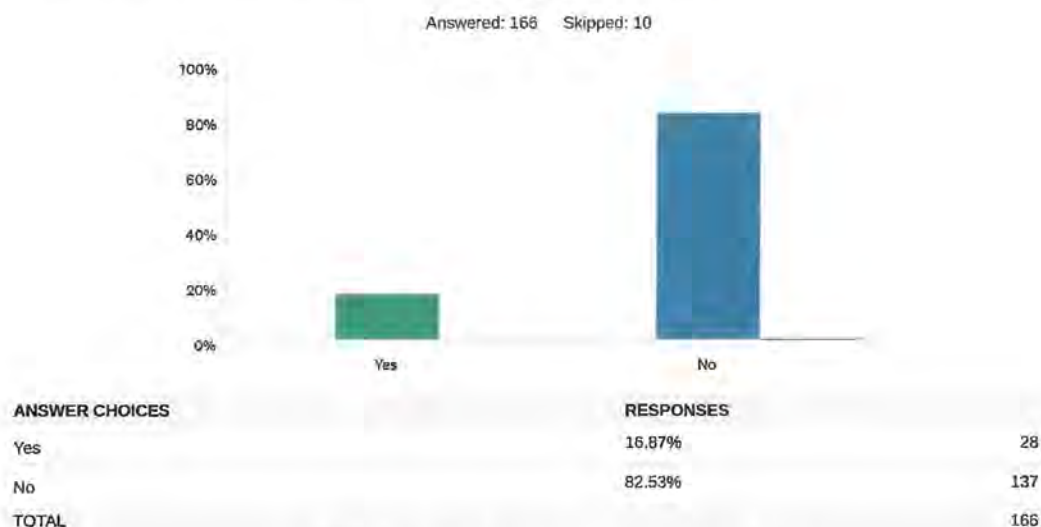


Figure 11. Should women teach men from Scripture

It is worth correlating the data from participants who have attended a church with a female pastor with survey responses relating to questions of women serving in ministry.

There are more individuals who have had a female pastor than there are people who

Q23 Do you believe the title, "pastor" should be used for both men and women?

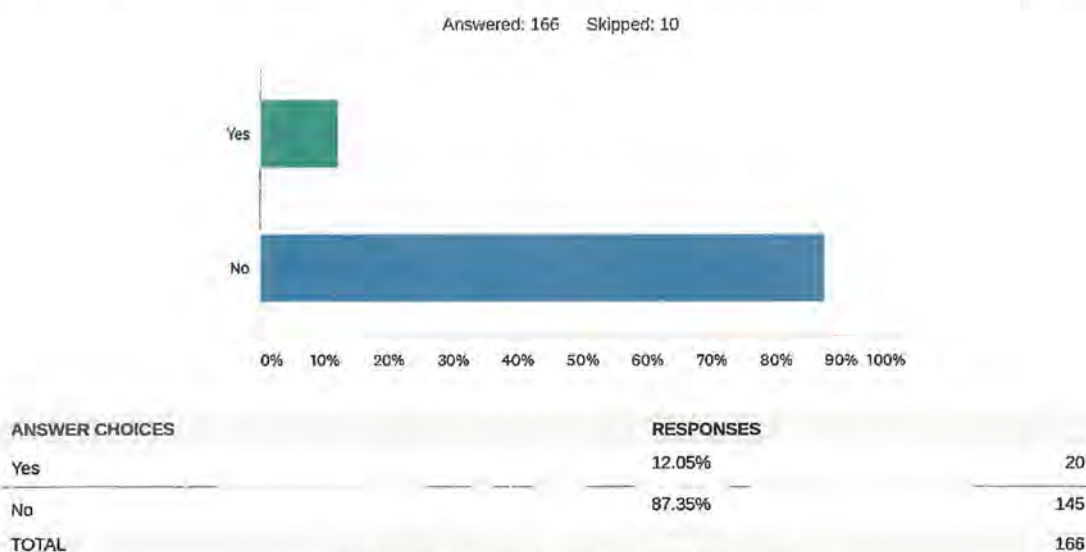


Figure 12. The term "pastor" for men and women

believe a woman should teach men; even fewer participants believe the title “pastor” should be used for both men and women (see *Figure 12* on the previous page). This means that there are a handful of individuals who, though formerly attending a church with a female pastor, don’t believe women should be pastors.

Evaluation

Results from data collected regarding members of Grace Community Church and their beliefs about women’s roles within the church were surprising. Much like the opinions of the senior and lead pastors of the Charis Fellowship, the results indicate a strong complementarian mindset. In qualitative responses, participants often drew from a conservative biblical view, citing 1 Timothy 2 or 1 Corinthians 14 in their explanations.

There were several individuals who offered other points of view. Their reasoning varied. Some argued that if the knowledge and work between pastors and female directors were the same, then the church should offer equality in titles. Others explained that by not allowing women to teach men, the church is stifling women’s use of God’s gifts. A couple people explained that, though they strongly disagreed with Grace Community’s stance, they still would attend regularly.

It is clear that even though many people have a relatively strong grasp on the subject, the church still needs to provide more teaching. One must remember that this survey did not include regular attendees who are not yet members. Furthermore, our culture is continuing to push this subject in such a way that makes it unavoidable.

CHAPTER 5

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY AND CONCLUSIONS AS A RESULT OF THIS PROJECT

The goal of this project is ultimately to create a contemporary policy for leaders within our church, both paid and volunteer, regarding women's roles in ministry. This policy will help clear up misunderstandings regarding the subject and guide our leaders toward healthy, biblical ministry. The policy developed from the research and data compiled in this project provides specific guidelines and boundaries. Working with other churches, even those within our fellowship, can be complicated. What does a youth pastor do when another youth pastor wants to have a woman teach at a retreat? How should the church react when hosting an event alongside other partner churches who ask women to teach men? A robust policy on this topic will assist church leaders in making critical decisions for their congregations and will allow for all leaders within our local network to remain consistent with each other.

This policy is coupled with a teaching curriculum needed. The curriculum is designed and tailored to teach the Grace Community congregation. It leverages the Scriptures, as well as the data collected when through this project. The curriculum is divided into four teaching segments and should take about six weeks to complete. The goal of this curriculum is to present a clear stance with supporting rationale. Thus, even if a congregant disagrees with the teachings, at least they know where our church stands.

AN ATTEMPT TO DRAW THE LINE

Everyone wants to know where “the line” is. What is right? What is wrong? Is there gray area? I have talked to many individuals on this topic, and every single person has brought up specific situations in which a woman led or taught men. “Did that cross the line?” they ask. Others ignore this issue outright, because they feel it’s impossible to pinpoint an exact line between right and wrong. In their mind, if no one can point to an exact line, then the whole subject is a gray area and shouldn’t be brought up. Since culture presses “equality” between the sexes, and since Scripture addresses this issue multiple times, I believe ignoring it is not a realistic option.

It would be impossible to think through the millions of scenarios that could exist within ministry, but I do believe God provides clear standards for church leadership. These standards are the backbone of this project’s policy and curriculum.

Definitions in 1 Timothy 2

To better understand the ramifications of 1 Timothy 2, a few terms must be defined: 1) what is a “worship service”; 2) what is “teaching”; and 3) what is “man”? Those who hold to a literal meaning of this passage must answer each of these questions. Defining these concepts from Scripture will assist us in drawing a line between right and wrong, and for developing a helpful policy for Grace Community Church.

Worship Service

Throughout this passage, the context suggests that these commands are to be applied during the worship service, starting in verse eight. Paul is teaching Timothy how men and women are to conduct themselves within a church service gathering. All

scholars I have researched understand this to be the case. Many scholars point to the phrase, “in every place” as referring to different churches in separate localities.⁴³¹ The question that comes into focus is what constitutes a church gathering or service?

There are several passages that come to mind when trying to define a worship service. We see early on that the church practiced meeting together on a regular basis. Actually, at the very beginning, the church met together in the temple courts every day (Acts 2:46). We know that worship and praise was a part of a church gathering. Paul expected the church in Corinth to be singing hymns and listening to teaching and revelations when they came together (1 Cor. 14:26). The service was to also to be done in a proper and orderly manner (1 Cor. 14:40), and it was to be attended by all believers (Heb. 10:25).

A worship service, then, could be defined as a group of believers gathered together to worship God and listen to teaching. How many people do there have to be? Jesus reminds us that when two or three have gathered together in His name, He is there as well (Matt. 18:20). Churches have leadership structures, they do ministry, and they practice ordinances, but I don’t believe that a church service or gathering of believers should be defined as always having these characteristics.⁴³² Thus, retreats or small groups outside church buildings should be defined as church services. I don’t believe a strong argument can be made that a group of believers meeting together for worship and teaching outside the church building could constitute something other than a church service.

⁴³¹ House, *Ministry*, 159.

⁴³² Enns, *Theology*, 353- 354.

Teaching

The term “teaching” in the New Testament had to do with instruction in Scripture by pointing to salvation in Christ.⁴³³ The noun, “the teaching” (didaskalia), refers to the authoritative apostolic gospel that church leaders were to proclaim. Here, “to teach” (didasko) is a verb and can safely be taken as a reference to the authoritative activity of teaching within a church service.⁴³⁴

The main job of the teacher wasn’t to devise some concept they deem truth. The teacher was to teach truth out of Scripture. Paul reminds Timothy in his second letter that all Scripture should be used for teaching (2 Tim. 3:16), and he charged Timothy to preach the word by reproving, rebuking, and exhorting (2 Tim. 4:2). Paul commands Timothy to entrust the truth to faithful men who will be able to teach others (2 Tim. 2:2). In Paul’s letter to Titus, Paul exhorts Titus to ground his teachings in Jesus’ sacrifice for mankind (Titus 2:11-15). He instructs the same thing in 1 Timothy (1 Tim. 4:11). Yarbrough argues that these instructions were real-time snapshots of “teaching and exercising authority” when it came to the corporate assembly.⁴³⁵

This does not mean women cannot teach in any capacity. Homer Kent reminds us that women are to participate in evangelism, and this would include the mission field, provided they do not take for themselves the biblical authority and teaching when qualified males are available. We are reminded how both Aquila and Priscilla taught Apollos by taking him aside to explain the Christian gospel and the significance of God’s

⁴³³ Gordon D. Fee, *1 and 2 Timothy, Titus*, New International Biblical Commentary (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1988), 73.

⁴³⁴ Towner, *Letters*, 217.

⁴³⁵ Yarbrough, *1 Timothy*, 185.

work that followed the resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ (Acts 18:26).⁴³⁶ Paul declares that women should teach other women (Titus 2:3-5).⁴³⁷ It also appears that Timothy himself was taught the Scriptures from his own mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5-6; 2 Tim. 3:14). The idea of teaching seems to only be applied to teaching men out of Scripture within a church gathering. Therefore, any teaching outside a church service performed by a woman would not apply to Paul's instruction.

Man

The last term we should define is the word man. What is a man? Does a boy become a man at a different time in modern culture than that of Paul's culture? I have heard some church leaders argue that today a boy doesn't become man until his late 20s! I'd have to disagree with this assertion.

The word man (*aner*) stands in distinction from a woman, boy, or infant, and it is a common Greek word for man.⁴³⁸ Jacob Kapp explains that a Jewish boy was expected to learn a trade and become independent at the age of twelve. He was expected to know the whole Law by age thirteen but did not come into full rights as a citizen until he was twenty.⁴³⁹ We must remember that some Jewish kings took the throne at rather young ages, such as Josiah who became king at eight and who quickly demonstrated his ability

⁴³⁶ Kistemaker, *Acts*, 668.

⁴³⁷ Kent, *Epistles*, 114.

⁴³⁸ Leipzig Albrecht Oepke, "άνήρ," in *Theological Dictionary on the New Testament*, ed. Gerhard Kittel (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 360-363.

⁴³⁹ Jacob W. Kapp, "Boy," in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia Vol. 1*, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979), 538.

to lead a nation in a righteous manner—during his teen years he reformed Judah’s religious structure (2 Kings 22:1).⁴⁴⁰ The question of timing does not limit what Paul was trying to express, although it does make it difficult to draw a specific line.

Using the data collected, some pastors in the Charis Fellowship stated that they draw the line at age 15, while others believed a male should be considered a man by Paul’s reasoning at age 13. I would argue that a boy becomes a man anytime between the ages of 12-20. This assertion also fits within our western culture of becoming independent in the eyes of the government at age eighteen. The eight-year time span may be considered a gray area, but it would be difficult to make a case for a man being under the age of twelve or a boy over the age of twenty. Furthermore, this does not mean having women teach males within this age range is the best practice.

Implications for Women in Ministry

Scripture is clear: women may teach in the church and outside the church, but there are important restrictions pertaining to women in a church gathering. An attempt to draw the line between right and wrong practices as stated by Paul (1 Tim. 2:12) must exist within the parameters of a church gathering. In Paul’s words, any teaching outside of a church gathering should not apply. A church gathering includes any gathering of believers who are meeting together for worship, prayer, or instruction in God’s Word.

Based on Paul’s words, teaching would be considered as any form of instruction based in Scripture. This would not include reading a passage, as they are just conveying

⁴⁴⁰ Arthur S. Peake, “Josiah,” in *Dictionary of the Bible Vol 2*, ed. James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1911), 788.

information, not weighing interpretation or application. In regard to women, this also fits with Paul's instruction in 1 Corinthians 14, in which he prohibits women from weighing in on prophecies. Prayer or singing a song should not be considered as weighing in on Scripture or applying meaning or application to it.

When does a boy become a man? This is a gray area, but we have can certainly use Scripture and our current cultural context to offer a helpful guide. I believe it is more than reasonable to deem those over the age of 20 as adult males, and those under the age of 12 as boys.

Drawing the line becomes less difficult when applying these three concepts from 1 Timothy 2. Paul not only outlines protocol on the worship service, but he also presents reasons for his instructions. Therefore, this passage teaches that a woman should not teach Scripture by applying instruction or application to a male over the age of 20, in a formal gathering of believers.

A WRITTEN POLICY

Policies should be written in a clear and concise manner. They should not aim to cover every possible situation. This would be far too complicated and would prove to be much less useful. The policy on women in ministry for Grace Community Church in Fremont, Ohio must be a simple set of guidelines that will serve as a tool for leaders and staff within the local church.

In order to make the policy more accessible, I broke it down into four categories: value/worth, roles, function, and practical implications. First, I want to recognize the value and worth of women not just in society, but specifically to God and the church.

Second, I wanted to establish the roles women may or may not hold within the church. The roles discussed will include elder, overseer, pastor, and deacon. Next, I explain the functions of the roles women are encouraged to take up within the church. Last, I offer practical examples especially pertinent to this issue. These examples will assist staff members in gaining a clear understanding of our church's stance on this issue.

Value/ Worth

At the forefront of this policy, it is very important to reaffirm the truth that men and women are created equal. Both men and women were made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27) and both come together as one in Christ (Gal. 3:28). God designed man and woman to need each other. We must remember that Adam could not find a helper suitable for him. We must also remember that Eve was created for Adam. Paul reminds us that men and women are not independent of each other (1 Cor. 11:11). Leadership at Grace Community Church places high value on women and their contributions to the church.

Women have played crucial roles within the church throughout all of church history. The importance of women's ministry is clear even in the life of Jesus, and then even more in the New Testament church. Women were a major part of the early church, and we see many examples throughout the New Testament. Women have played significant roles throughout church history, too. God has demonstrated His sovereign and incredible love to both men and women (Rom. 5:8). He does not discriminate in any way, and both sexes are to serve God through His church.

Roles

Paul mentions several offices within the church—overseers, elders, pastors, and deacons are all distinguishable offices within Paul’s writings. The leadership at Grace Community Church holds firm to the belief that God has created men and women equal, yet different. These differences can be seen in the New Testament’s teaching on roles within the church.

My local church holds that leadership within the church corresponds to the role of elder or overseer. Our leadership believes this office is only reserved for men who meet the certain biblical qualifications (Titus 1, 1 Tim. 3, 1 Pet. 5). It is important to note that Scripture suggests that only a select few men may serve in this capacity. Only men who meet the qualifications as stated in Scripture should be considered for this role.

We also believe that the title of “pastor” in our culture is, on almost all occasions, associated with people who are elders or overseers of the local church. Therefore, it would not be wise for a church to bestow the title “pastor” upon a woman. I understand that many women are gifted with the spiritual gift of shepherding, but this should only be done under biblical parameters. There are plenty of men who have the gift of teaching or shepherding but are not qualified to be elders or overseers.

Grace Community Church has a tradition of women holding the office of deacon or deaconess. The survey revealed that a substantial portion of our members don’t agree with this policy; for now, however, women are permitted and encouraged to become deaconesses. This policy was set forth by Paul in his first letter to Timothy, and it has been substantiated throughout church history (1 Tim. 3).

Function

The next section of the policy provides functional explanation for women's roles within the church. I conclude that women are encouraged to hold various leadership positions within the local church, except those of elder, overseer, and pastor. Within the church context, these positions are also prohibited from men who do not meet the qualifications (Titus 1, 1 Tim. 3, 1 Pet. 5).

We also affirm that men are to be the leaders within Christ's body, because they are the head of women. Paul explains that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman (1 Cor. 11:3). Later, Paul describes man as being the image and glory of God, while the woman is the glory of man. Further, Paul explains that man does not originate from woman, but woman from man—man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake (1 Cor. 11:7-9). Ever since the beginning of time, we see that God appointed man as a spiritual and family leader—this is still true today.

I end the policy by affirming the spiritual gifts given to women. Women have every opportunity to receive spiritual gifts through the Spirit, as do men (Eph. 4, Rom. 12). Women must be free to use their spiritual gifts within the boundaries of Scripture, just like men. Both men and women are bound by biblical parameters. Women who have a real relationship with Christ have indeed acquired spiritual gifts that are to be used for the edification of the church. Even the gift of teaching or shepherding should be used within the boundaries God has given us, such as teaching children and women.

Practical Implications

Last, the policy provides further assistance to leaders trying to make wise judgments in various situations. I felt it necessary to explain that no pastor or leader of Grace Community Church was to allow a woman to preach or teach out of Scripture within a class or small group setting consisting of men or teenage boys, citing 1 Tim. 2. Could there be an argument for women teaching younger teenagers? Probably, but this policy helps direct church leaders toward what I feel is best for the church as a whole.

No pastor or leader of the church is to knowingly allow a woman to preach or teach out of Scripture to men or teenage males at a function associated with the church. These may include, but are not limited to, conferences, retreats, bible studies, etc. I also believe it is not best practice for a woman to preach or teach men at a wedding ceremony or funeral, but I decided against putting these events in the policy, as the focus in wedding and funerals is not necessarily worship or teaching, nor is it a formal church gathering or service. Often, the officiant will explain the gospel, but the main focus is either marriage or remembering a loved one.

Also, no pastor or church leader is to take men to an event where women are preaching God's Word. This would be in direct violation of Paul's instructions, even though the event is not held in our building or on our property. It is also not advised for Grace Community Church to directly support a church planter or missionary who identifies herself as an elder or overseer. She would be in direct violation of Scripture, and it would be unwise to distribute church funds in that setting, rather funds should be given elsewhere. This is not a firm policy, but more of an advisory statement.

Scripture is clear. Within the context of the church, men should teach men. Likewise, women should teach women, but when both sexes are present, men should be the ones to lead. We as a church must do our best to model God's instruction on how His church is to function, especially within leadership positions.

CURRICULUM FOR UNDERSTANDING

Understanding this topic can be difficult. Emotions run deep. Many people have opinions on what is right or wrong, but few have a firm foundation in Scripture. This is a problem. God's Word should always trump our emotions or feelings in life. In fact, God's Word ought to *shape* our opinions and beliefs. A tailored curriculum on the roles of women in ministry was needed for the congregation and staff at Grace Community.

The curriculum is divided up into six parts for six weekly Bible studies. My desire is to teach biblical principles to our staff and congregation that will help them understand the biblical concepts regarding this subject in a way that does not offend, but also conveys sometimes hard to accept truth. In order to accomplish this, I need to keep each study simple by focusing on one main point.

Each lesson will consist of three main parts: Scripture, discussion questions, and a few key takeaways. This curriculum is designed to be taught primarily through discussion. This approach will provide answers to people's particular thoughts and questions. Each discussion will be led by a facilitator well versed in the topic. The curriculum is general, and the facilitator will need to study the material beforehand.

Lesson One: *Created Equals*

The first lesson is entitled Created Equals. This lesson focuses on the idea that God has purposefully and wonderfully made man and woman as complementary equals. Both man and woman were created in the image of God, and God declared them both as being very good. The main Bible passage used for these truths is Genesis 1:26-31. The passage will be read at the beginning of the lesson, and then explained by the teacher. Galatians 3:25-29 will be used as a secondary passage. This passage declares that man and woman are equal in Christ. He loves and has saved us all equally.

The discussion questions are designed to promote interaction among the group. I want people to think deeply about what it means to be made in God's image. How does it change the way we view our life? I also want people to think about God's declaration after the first day that Adam and Eve were very good. This, along with Christ's work on the cross, demonstrates the value God places on every person.

Lesson Two: *In The Beginning*

Key passages for this lesson will mostly come from the creation account and the fall of mankind. My primary goal for this lesson is to help class attendees better understand the beginning of mankind, specifically how it pertains to the relationship and fall of Adam and Eve. This lesson uses verses in Genesis 2, as well as most of Genesis 3.

One thing I point out is that God states it is not good for Adam to be alone. He realized early on that he needed a helper, someone like him to be in intimate relationship with. Thus, God created Eve as a helper for Adam. A helper bears negative connotations

in our culture and society, but it was not meant to be a negative role. God also grants Adam the right to name Eve. God created Adam and Eve completely equal, yet different.

The second part of the lesson deals with the fall of mankind. This section will unpack Satan's choice to deceive Eve. This is significant because, as Paul explains in the New Testament, these events supported his reasoning and argument for why men lead in the home and the church. Eve was deceived, and Adam knowingly rebelled against God. Another key point to be discussed is that God, in searching for Adam and Eve after their disobedience, calls out to Adam, not Eve. This is not because Adam sinned more. Rather, God came for Adam because he was the leader of the human race.

Each question is designed to assist participants in understanding these two closely connected narratives. I want people to understand Adam's headship and leadership from the beginning. Weeks later, I want them to be able to connect Paul's words back to this event. It is also important that people understand how Satan works, and that he specifically chose to deceive Eve, not Adam. Eve chose to step into the leadership role for just a moment and mankind fell.

Lesson Three: *Jesus' Example*

Jesus is our ultimate example. We should strive to imitate Him in everything that we do. I believe Jesus set for us an example by appointing male leaders to lead His church. The first section of this lesson shows how Jesus chose twelve male disciples. Most of these men were uneducated, lower-class Jewish men who worked hard to earn a living. Jesus came as a man and spent most of His ministry with men.

The second section identifies one example of how Jesus valued and cared for women. His ministry was never solely focused on men. Rather, Christ reached out to both sexes. Maybe the best example of this is the story about the Samaritan woman at the well. She was probably a social outcast, and a Samaritan. Jesus broke all three cultural norms to show love and value to this woman. Even His disciples were surprised when they saw Him talking to her.

Questions in this lesson first provoke thoughts on Jesus' position on male leadership. Second, they reaffirm Jesus' position toward women in general. Even though Jesus recognized differences in men and women, He cared for and valued them equally. He pushed back against cultural prejudices, always doing the right and loving thing.

Lesson Four: *Marriage Relationship*

Biblically speaking, marriage is the second most important relationship we have in our life, and God gives us specific ways to do marriage. The primary passage to be used is Ephesians 5:22-33 and then, secondarily, Colossians 3:18-19. This lesson will focus on the marriage relationship, emphasizing that God has created man to lead within marriage. To help illustrate this idea, Paul describes the marriage relationship as similar to that of Christ and the church. Man is the head of the wife, as seen from creation.

Wives are to be subject to their husbands, and husbands are to love their wives in a self-sacrificial way. Naturally, we rebel against this commandment due to the pride and selfishness in our hearts. It will be important to point out that submission does not mean one is inferior or valued less than the other. Rather, submission is a role that wives fulfill, while husbands are primarily the leader and protector.

Discussion in this lesson will focus on what it means for a husband to be the head of the wife and home, as well as the reason why God wants wives to be submissive to their husbands. This is a difficult subject, and our culture constantly misinterprets and pushes against this thinking. I want participants in this study to come away with a correct understanding of marriage—marriage done God’s way. If wives could submit to their husbands, and if husbands could love their wives like Christ loved the church, then marriage would be a wondrous experience for all. Marriage was created by God and was meant to be centered around a firm relationship with Him.

Lesson Five: Teaching Within the Church

Lesson five will consist of the most controversial part of the study, dealing with women’s roles in the church, primarily with preaching and teaching. The main passage in this lesson will be 1 Timothy 2:9-15, where Paul discusses women’s roles in the worship service. Titus 2:3-5 will be used as a secondary reference point. First Paul expresses that his desire that women adorn themselves with proper clothing and modesty. Their reputation should be reflected by their good works, not their clothes.

Next, Paul states that women should quietly receive instruction with submissiveness, and they should not teach or exercise authority over a man in church gatherings. Paul’s commands in this passage are counter-cultural, and they may even sound bigoted to some. However, submission does not imply inferiority or limited worth. Submission is a voluntary act of putting oneself under the headship of another, much like Christ voluntarily submitted to God the Father.

I also want to emphasize the role of teaching in the church. Women are not to teach men from Scripture within a church gathering. This may be difficult for some to accept, but it is clear that God's desire is for men to lead within the home and the church. That does not mean that women do not have a place to serve or lead, however. Women are to learn along with men and are to exercise their gifts by teaching other women. This is where the Titus 2 passage will come into play.

The questions discussed in this lesson are to point those in the group towards God's leadership roles in the church. First, the discussion is geared towards Paul's instruction on women's conduct during church gatherings, but then moves to the three main concepts that need to be defined in 1 Timothy 2. I want the group to define what events should be considered church gatherings. Then I want the group to define teaching. Next, I want the group to discuss at what age should a boy be considered a man. By having the group weigh in on such definitions, I believe they will be able to take ownership of their understanding of the passage.

Last, I want the group to discuss Paul's reasoning. After becoming familiar with the creation story and the fall of mankind during weeks one and two, they will be able to relate to the reasoning Paul's behind his instruction.

Lesson Six: *Who Should Lead?*

The sixth and final lesson will allow group members to examine who should be leading the church. This lesson will mostly focus on the qualifications for elders, overseers, and deacons. I think it is important to remind the group that Paul does not mean all men should lead, or that all women should do nothing. On the contrary, Paul

gives specific qualifications as to who is able to lead the local church. 1 Timothy 3:1-13 will be the fundamental text for this lesson, and Titus 1:5-9 will be a secondary text.

After discussing the qualifications of elders and overseers, I desire to shift focus to the office of deacon. Many scholars do not believe Paul's reference to women in this passage refers to the idea of deaconess. Currently, Grace Community Church holds that women may be deacons and are able to serve their church in this way. This group will discuss the short list of qualifications Paul gives for deaconesses.

Discussion questions in this lesson are important and are designed to assist the group in thinking about their personal leadership roles within the church. I believe God has called us to serve and lead in our local church according to our gifts and capacities. It is interesting that God has divided the roles of overseer and deacon, yet both are leaders. Deacons are to lead in a manner of serving by taking care of specific material needs within the church, while elders and overseers are primarily tasked to preach, teach, and shepherd the flock. The group will discuss the qualifications and elements associated with both roles. Hopefully the participants will also be encouraged to increase their service and leadership roles at Grace Community Church.

CHAPTER 6

FINAL OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Though I had long been aware that there was a plurality of views regarding women in ministry, it was only a few years ago when I confronted the issue firsthand as a church leader. I admit that I had no idea how complicated the issue was, nor did I have a firm grasp on what I believed. If I had to put myself in a camp then, I would said I was a partial egalitarian. After spending countless hours in deep study, examining all aspects of this debate; I found myself shifting views.

It has been amazing to explore God's Word on a deeper level. Having a better grasp on the reason God made mankind, and the way He did it; allows me to have a better and more complete theology of Him. Scripture was written for our instruction and the church has been dependent on both the Old and New Testaments since the beginning (Rom. 15:4).⁴⁴¹ We, as believers, should always seek truth in Scripture *before* we adopt the ideas and beliefs that our culture teaches.

REVIEW AND OBSERVATIONS

Five main views on women's roles within church ministry have developed over time by believers. Two of these views emerged in the past hundred years or so. Various Christians within our western culture hold to either a patriarchal, complementarian, partial egalitarian, full egalitarian, or evangelical feminist way of thinking. It is important

⁴⁴¹ Everett F. Harrison, *Romans*, The Expositor's Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 152.

that we, as Christ's body, continue to reach the lost world with unity, even though we may not agree on every theological issue.

Through Scripture, we are reminded that both man and woman were created in God's image, and that God said it was good (Gen. 1:31). Creation provides us with an understanding of both sexes. God created Adam, and then He created for Adam a helper, Eve. Eve was formed out of man, and Adam was the leader in the relationship. He had the right to name Eve, and God named the human race after Adam. In the garden, a perfect world, Adam and Eve complemented each other in perfect ways. This did not last long, however, as Eve was deceived and disobeyed God. Adam, too, rebelled and these events resulted in separation from God—and with it, the battle of the sexes.

Women played prominent roles throughout the Old Testament. We see many women who God used to do great things. Women like Eve, Sarah, Hagar, Rebekah, Rachel, Leah, Tamar, Miriam, and Rahab are a few women who God used to create, lead, and save the nation of Israel. Although women never served as priests, God did occasionally use them as prophetesses. For example, Miriam was a prophetess who helped Moses lead the Jewish people out of Egypt (Exod. 15:20), and Deborah judged the nation of Israel for a time (Judg. 4:5).

Jesus, our perfect example, encouraged women to play important roles in His ministry. He was extremely counter-cultural, never letting his first century culture dictate right and wrong. Jesus elevated women to their proper status, as equal co-workers with men. Even though Jesus was counter cultural, He still became incarnate as a man, and he referred to God as Father (Matt. 26:42), suggesting that men are to lead in certain areas of life, especially in spiritual matters. Jesus appointed twelve male disciples (Mark 3:14-19)

to start and lead His church, yet He still showed love, care, and support for women. He allowed women to sit at His feet (Luke 10:39), and He went out of His way to cross cultural boundaries to interact with women (John 4:7). Jesus healed women (Mark 16:9), quoted women from the Old Testament (Luke 4:25-26), and allowed women to follow Him (Luke 8:1-3).

This elevation of women didn't end with Jesus' resurrection, but continued into the New Testament church, which we see through Acts, as well as Paul's epistles. From the very beginning, God poured out His Spirit on both men and women. Women hosted communities of believers in their homes, delivered letters, and financially supported the church. They played key roles in helping the church gain its footing. We never see a woman teaching the Scriptures during a public worship service, however.

Peter gave specific instructions regarding gender roles. He uses several women from the Old Testament to illustrate how a wife is supposed to submit to her husband (1 Pet. 3:1-7). Peter stresses that the husband needs to be the leader of the home. Likewise, husbands are to live with their wives in an understanding way (1 Pet. 3:7).

Paul taught on church leadership and gender roles. There are many instances where Paul praises women in the church (Rom. 16:1-2). It is clear that he deeply valued women, while also teaching that their roles differed from men's.

According to Paul, wives are to be subject to their husbands because a husband is the head of his wife (Eph. 5:22-23). Headship is an important concept regarding the home, the church, and male leadership. Paul also describes how a proper church service should function, and he prohibits women from teaching and exercising authority over

men (1 Tim. 2:12). Further, he lists qualifications for elders and overseers, including the command that these positions be filled by men (1 Tim. 3:2-4).

Women were mistreated throughout church history. At the same time, women filled crucial roles to help advance the gospel. Women shared the gospel, supported the church, developed theology, wrote songs, and even died as martyrs for their faith. The records of both Christians and secular governments testify to the incredible faith of women throughout church history—even when they faced punishment and death.

Over the past 2,000 years, the majority of Christians have understood the New Testament to prohibit women from teaching men. This does not limit the spiritual gifts women can receive from the Holy Spirit, but it does mean women must use their spiritual gifts in a biblical way. Men, too, must use their spiritual gifts within God's boundaries.

Survey data gathered for this project shows that many pastors within our network of churches hold a complementarian view. This was encouraging, and it helped guide the development of a policy on women in ministry for Grace Community Church. I gained valuable insights into why pastors and staff hold certain beliefs.

Likewise, survey results from the congregation at Grace Community Church provided a baseline understanding of where the congregation stands on this issue. The results were surprising in many ways, and they have informed the development of a small group curriculum on this topic.

After “drawing the line” on women's roles within the local church, I wrote a policy for local church leaders. This policy is important and will assist both paid staff and volunteers within Grace Community Church in making wise decisions. Similarly, the curriculum was based on biblical study, church history, and survey data.

SCRIPTURE TRUMPS EMOTIONS

God designed people to be highly emotional beings. The subject of women working in ministry taps into our emotions, often getting people “fired up” on all sides. Furthermore, it is an issue for which we can so easily incorporate our biases and anecdotal evidence. Throughout the research portion of this project, I experienced both complementarians and egalitarians acting with bias, or responding in emotional ways. Likewise, the research into my congregation revealed a lot of emotion on both sides of this issue.

One pastor, most likely a partial egalitarian, shared a story with me. He had once encouraged a woman to teach a small Sunday school class—she ended up doing an excellent job. She was well liked, well informed, and filled with the Holy Spirit. After she taught the class, some women who did not share the same convictions as the pastor confronted him about the topic, and it ended up causing a small fissure within the church. In fact, when the woman teaching heard that others didn’t believe she should have been allowed to teach men, she decided to never serve in the church again. Situations like this are not uncommon. People get offended and react strongly.

An anthology presented by a Charis Fellowship group called the WoRTh Project gives several stories of women within our own network of churches who have felt limited in their ability to serve, and specifically limited by men. Many of these individuals seem to have a partial egalitarian view, believing that both men and women should teach in general. It appears that many of their experiences have been caused by interacting with those who hold a complementarian view.

Similarly, Grace Connect, a Charis Fellowship affiliated magazine, recently published quarterly issue entirely dedicated to this topic. As I read through the articles, I read many emotional stories of how women have felt held back by pastors in Charis Fellowship churches for not allowing them to present or teach. We must remember, however, that emotions should not dictate how we serve the Lord. Everyone has certain ways they prefer to do ministry, but we need to submit to God's authority. We should not trust our emotions, which are inherently fickle, when making judgment calls. Our decisions should be based on God's Word coupled with rational thinking.

CONCLUSION

Beginning with Adam and Eve, God designed man to lead in the church and home in a self-sacrificial way. God created men and women as equals, but He also created them differently. Both the New Testament and the last 2,000 years of church history affirm this truth. Still, both men and women have played important roles in the church's growth. Men and women complement each other in ways only God could have designed.

Based on biblical, historical, and cultural research, I've concluded that Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians, 1 Timothy, and Titus are indeed supra-cultural and normative. The managing and shepherding positions in the church should be held by men when both sexes are involved.⁴⁴² Qualified men are to lead by teaching in the local church.

⁴⁴² Gene A. Getz, *Elders and Leaders: God's Plan for Leading the Church, A Biblical, Historical and Cultural Perspective* (Chicago: Moody, 2003), 115.

My Dilemma

Throughout this project, one question has continually bounced around my mind: if God instructs men to lead as elders and overseers, and if God instructs women not to teach men, then is it sin when we do the opposite? This question of sin as it relates to this topic is rarely discussed. Even complementarians, who argue vehemently that women should not teach men, don't talk about the sin aspect of this subject.

Recently, I was discussing this subject with a friend and he questioned whether women teaching Scripture to a group of men could possibly be sin. I asked him, "What's the definition of sin?" John reminds us that sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4). This is a universal truth and there are no exceptions.⁴⁴³ Sin, then, is openly disobeying God's instruction. Scripture provides clear directives in this area. Unfortunately, many pastors and Christian leaders don't take the time to study what Scripture says about this topic. They chose not to take a side, as if that were an option. This is wrong and irresponsible.

Many people hold to a thinking much like this: "There are experts and scholars on all sides of this issue. If they can't agree, then how it is possible to know the correct position?" They reason that since this issue is so complicated and confusing, the most loving thing to do is to allow women to fulfill the same roles as men.⁴⁴⁴ Some call this issue an ethical one, but we must remember that ethics help us evaluate the rightness or wrongness of our practice.⁴⁴⁵ Our evaluation must be based in Scripture. Thus, the

⁴⁴³ Daniel L. Akin, *1,2,3 John*, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 2001), 139.

⁴⁴⁴ Kathy Keller, *Jesus, Justice, and Gender Roles: A Case for Gender Roles in Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 28.

⁴⁴⁵ John S. Feinberg and Paul D. Feinberg, *Ethics For a Brave New World* (Wheaton: Crossway: 2010), 15.

question is not: “Is it ethical in our society?” Rather, the question we must ask it: “Is it right in God’s eyes?”

Kathy Keller, a vocal complementarian and wife of Timothy Keller, the renowned founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, points out two assumptions with thinking that places ethics at the center. One, she argues that, in a sense, the question of ethics is a product of our culture’s postmodern despair that absolute truth does not exist. Second, this type of thinking assumes the Bible presents an unclear and muddled message on the subject of divinely ordained gender roles in the New Testament.⁴⁴⁶ As a church leader, it isn’t an option to be undecided, or to skirt around the issue. This is an issue that is only becoming more prominent. Church leaders must seek biblical counsel on the topic.

Unity with Others

The question of sin still weighs on me. Again, I believe that ignoring God’s instruction is indeed sin. This presents a problem for our church, since we work with other churches who strongly disagree with this premise.

There are churches within our network pushing partial and full egalitarian views in the Charis Fellowship. Dr. Paul Klawitter, a long-time church planter and missionary, argues that all men who have not been called to be elders are in the exact same position as women.⁴⁴⁷ This partial egalitarian thinking limits women in the office of eldership or

⁴⁴⁶ Keller, *Roles*, 29.

⁴⁴⁷ Paul Klawitter, “The Over- And Under-Realized Ideal for Women: A Biblical Theology,” in *A Missional Mosaic: An Anthology Presented by the WoRTh Project: Working Towards A Robust Theology of Women on Mission*, ed. Louise Klawitter and Becky Schwan (Atlanta: Encompass World Partners, 2017), 33.

overseer but allows for women to teach men out of Scripture in a church gathering. This seems to be in direct violation of Paul's instruction (1 Tim. 2:12).

It is difficult to discern the level of cooperation our church should have with organizations that push theological concepts which we deem unbiblical. Any response must be contrasted with the Bible's call for unity among believers. The encouraging news is that the majority of the fellowship, at least the ones who participated in my research, does not seem ready to ordain women, nor give women the title of pastor. However, it is important our leaders recognize that, within our fellowship, there is a small movement of pastors and staff advocating for change in this area.

I believe it is important for us to cooperate with these churches and organizations in a general way, but it may also be wise to limit our collaboration. For example, I don't think it is wise for our church to send a group of men and women to an event which includes women teaching at a worship service. CE National is one example. This parachurch organization produces a large youth conference for teenagers, but frequently employs women as main speakers. Our new policy would prohibit our church from participating in an event like this. Some people argue that a retreat or conference isn't a church gathering, but it is difficult for me to envision Paul not calling a group of believers gathering to participate in worship, prayer, and biblical teachings a church gathering. This makes working together difficult in certain areas, but we can still be united in our mission of reaching the lost. We are on the same team, and we should never actively oppose each other. Still, we must be wise about collaborating in ministry when significant theological differences exist.

Final Thoughts

Women play a major role in our church today, just as they always have. God has uniquely gifted female believers in specific ways to build up the church. Men, especially those in leadership positions, should encourage women to use their gifts to advance the kingdom. Both men and women share the same worth and value. Women are used in many of the same ways men are used. One sex is not to be elevated above the other.

I admit that there are women who are better teachers than me, who know the Bible better, who have a closer relationship with God, and who can manage an office more effectively. Still, God has created men and women to complement each other, and it is clear that it is God's will for men to lead.

Why do we as the church tend to ignore women's ministries or children's ministries? Why are women so eager to teach men? Practically speaking, wouldn't it be better for women to focus their gifts on fellow women. Childhood is a critical time in one's life, and spiritually mature believers should focus much of their talents and resources on children. Many leaders, including women, choose to focus on one part of ministry in which God prohibits them, thereby ignoring their freedom to minister in countless other ways. The fields are white for harvest (John 4:35).

I am not saying that God cannot or does not use women to teach men within the church. We know that God uses all things for good to those who love God (Rom. 8:28). There are many people who can identify good fruit that came from women teaching men. However, I believe God will bless the work of the church more if women teach women and children (Titus 2:3-4).

The local church belongs to God. He makes the rules, and it is our obligation to follow them. Men must lead. When men ignore this calling, the church suffers. Not because women are inferior, or because they aren't as capable as men, but because God has ordained men to lead from the beginning. Men should focus on teaching men, and women should focus on teaching women. When both are present, it is man's responsibility to lead in a loving, self-sacrificial way. "Male and female He created them... And behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:27; 31)

APPENDIX 1

ADDENDUM 1

Initial Pre-notice Letter (Charis Fellowship Staff)

Date: February 21, 2020

Dear Charis Fellowship Church Staff,

You have been selected to answer questions in a survey that will help doctor of ministry candidate Zachary K. Pinkerton, student at Grace Theological Seminary, in his professional project entitled, "Women's Roles in the Church: A Policy and Curriculum for Grace Community Church, Fremont, Ohio." The purpose of this study is to better understand the beliefs of church leaders within the Charis Fellowship when it comes to the Biblical roles of women in a church setting, explore God's Word on this issue, and provide a policy and curriculum for the local church.

If you are willing to help him (and we hope you will), this is how to proceed:

- Within the next few days, you will be given a link for a secure Survey Monkey website. Please anonymously answer questions regarding this subject. Survey Monkey will not record any personal information and the survey should only take approximately 5 minutes to complete.
- When you are done, simply click the "submit" button at the end of the survey to complete your responses.

All information given will be kept private and will be held on a password protected and firewall protected secure server that will only be accessible by the researcher. Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and you may stop participating at any time prior to clicking "submit." Simply close the window. Please understand that any responses published in Zach Pinkerton's professional project will not enable identification of you in any way.

If you have any questions about the survey or how your answers will be used, please call Zach Pinkerton at 419-332-2623 or email zpinkerton@ohiograce.com.

Thank you in advance for considering taking part of this important survey.

Sincerely,
Zach Pinkerton
D. Min. Student
Grace Theological Seminary

ADDENDUM 2

Request to Participate Informed Consent Letter (Charis Fellowship Staff)

Date: February 24, 2020

Dear Charis Fellowship Church Staff,

A few days ago, you were notified that you have been selected to answer questions in a survey that will help doctor of ministry candidate Zachary K. Pinkerton, student at Grace Theological Seminary, in his professional project entitled, "Women's Roles in the Church: A Policy and Curriculum for Grace Community Church, Fremont, Ohio." The purpose of this study is to better understand the beliefs of church leaders within the Charis Fellowship when it comes to the Biblical roles of women in a church setting, explore God's Word on this issue, and provide a policy and curriculum for the local church. To accomplish this, you will be asked a series of questions in a survey which should take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

If you are willing to participate, please read this letter carefully. Then, click the Survey Monkey link below. This will take you to the online survey which will not record any personal information. All information given will be kept private and will only be viewed by the researcher, Zach Pinkerton.

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and you may stop participating at any time prior to clicking "submit." Simply close the window. Please understand that any responses published in Zach Pinkerton's professional project will not enable identification of you in any way.

If you have any questions about the survey or how your answers will be used, please call Zach Pinkerton at 419-332-2623 or email zpinkerton@ohiograce.com.

I have read the informed consent letter and I agree to participate.

PLEASE CLICK HERE TO TAKE THIS SURVEY

Sincerely,
Zachary K. Pinkerton
D. Min. Student
Grace Theological Seminary

ADDENDUM 3

Follow-up Reminder (Charis Fellowship Staff)

Date: February 26, 2020

Dear Charis Fellowship Church Staff,

Several days ago, you were sent a request to answer questions in a survey that will help doctor of ministry candidate Zachary K. Pinkerton, student at Grace Theological Seminary, in his professional project entitled, "Women's Roles in the Church: A Policy and Curriculum for Grace Community Church, Fremont, Ohio." The purpose of this study is to better understand the beliefs of church leaders within the Charis Fellowship when it comes to the Biblical roles of women in a church setting, explore God's Word on this issue, and provide a policy and curriculum for the local church. To accomplish this, you will be asked a series of questions in a survey which should take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

If you are willing to participate, please read this letter carefully. Then, click the Survey Monkey link below. This will take you to the online survey which will not record any personal information. All information given will be kept private and will only be viewed by the researcher, Zach Pinkerton.

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and you may stop participating at any time prior to clicking "submit." Simply close the window. Please understand that any responses published in Zach Pinkerton's professional project will not enable identification of you in any way.

If you have any questions about the survey or how your answers will be used, please call Zach Pinkerton at 419-332-2623 or email zpinkerton@ohiograce.com.

I have read the informed consent letter and I agree to participate.

PLEASE CLICK HERE TO TAKE THIS SURVEY

Sincerely,
Zachary K. Pinkerton
D. Min. Student
Grace Theological Seminary

ADDENDUM 4

Initial Pre-notice Letter (Grace Community Church member)

Date: February 21, 2020

Dear attendee of Grace Community Church,

You have been selected to answer questions in a survey that will help doctor of ministry candidate Zachary K. Pinkerton, student at Grace Theological Seminary, in his professional project entitled, "Women's Roles in the Church: A Policy and Curriculum for Grace Community Church, Fremont, Ohio." The purpose of this study is to better understand the beliefs of those that call Grace their church home when it comes to the Biblical roles of women in a church setting, explore God's Word on this issue, and provide a policy and curriculum for the local church.

If you are willing to help him (and we hope you will), this is how to proceed:

- Within the next few days, you will be given a link for a secure Survey Monkey website. Please anonymously answer questions regarding this subject. Survey Monkey will not record any personal information and the survey should only take approximately 5 minutes to complete.
- When you are done, simply click the "submit" button at the end of the survey to complete your responses.

All information given will be kept private and will be held on a password protected and firewall protected secure server that will only be accessible by the researcher. Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and you may stop participating at any time prior to clicking "submit." Simply close the window. Please understand that any responses published in Zach Pinkerton's professional project will not enable identification of you in any way.

If you have any questions about the survey or how your answers will be used, please call Zach Pinkerton at 419-332-2623 or email zpinkerton@ohiograce.com.

Thank you in advance for considering taking part of this important survey.

Sincerely,

Zach Pinkerton
D. Min. Student
Grace Theological Seminary

ADDENDUM 5

Request to Participate Informed Consent Letter (Grace Community Church member)

Date: February 24, 2020

Dear attendee of Grace Community Church,

A few days ago, you were notified that you have been selected to answer questions in a survey that will help doctor of ministry candidate Zachary K. Pinkerton, student at Grace Theological Seminary, in his professional project entitled, "Women's Roles in the Church: A Policy and Curriculum for Grace Community Church, Fremont, Ohio." The purpose of this study is to better understand the beliefs of those that call Grace their church home when it comes to the Biblical roles of women in a church setting, explore God's Word on this issue, and provide a policy and curriculum for the local church. To accomplish this, you will be asked a series of questions in a survey which should take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

If you are willing to participate, please read this letter carefully. Then, click the Survey Monkey link below. This will take you to the online survey which will not record any personal information. All information given will be kept private and will only be viewed by the researcher, Zach Pinkerton.

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and you may stop participating at any time prior to clicking "submit." Simply close the window. Please understand that any responses published in Zach Pinkerton's professional project will not enable identification of you in any way.

If you have any questions about the survey or how your answers will be used, please call Zach Pinkerton at 419-332-2623 or email zpinkerton@ohiograce.com.

I have read the informed consent letter and I agree to participate.

PLEASE CLICK HERE TO TAKE THIS SURVEY

Sincerely,
Zachary K. Pinkerton
D. Min. Student
Grace Theological Seminary

ADDENDUM 6

Follow-up Reminder (Grace Community Church member)

Date: February 26, 2020

Dear attendee of Grace Community Church,

Several days ago, you were sent a request to answer questions in a survey that will help doctor of ministry candidate Zachary K. Pinkerton, student at Grace Theological Seminary, in his professional project entitled, "Women's Roles in the Church: A Policy and Curriculum for Grace Community Church, Fremont, Ohio." The purpose of this study is to better understand the beliefs of those that call Grace their church home when it comes to the Biblical roles of women in a church setting, explore God's Word on this issue, and provide a policy and curriculum for the local church. To accomplish this, you will be asked a series of questions in a survey which should take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

If you are willing to participate, please read this letter carefully. Then, click the Survey Monkey link below. This will take you to the online survey which will not record any personal information. All information given will be kept private and will only be viewed by the researcher, Zach Pinkerton.

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and you may stop participating at any time prior to clicking "submit." Simply close the window. Please understand that any responses published in Zach Pinkerton's professional project will not enable identification of you in any way.

If you have any questions about the survey or how your answers will be used, please call Zach Pinkerton at 419-332-2623 or email zpinkerton@ohiograce.com.

I have read the informed consent letter and I agree to participate.

If you have not yet had the chance to take the survey, please click below.

PLEASE CLICK HERE TO TAKE THIS SURVEY

Sincerely,
Zachary K. Pinkerton
D. Min. Student
Grace Theological Seminary

ADDENDUM 7

Final Reminder (Grace Community Church member)

Date: February 29, 2020

Dear attender of Grace Community Church,

Recently, you were sent a request to answer questions in a survey that will help doctor of ministry candidate Zachary K. Pinkerton, student at Grace Theological Seminary, in his professional project entitled, "Women's Roles in the Church: A Policy and Curriculum for Grace Community Church, Fremont, Ohio." The purpose of this study is to better understand the beliefs of those that call Grace their church home when it comes to the Biblical roles of women in a church setting, explore God's Word on this issue, and provide a policy and curriculum for the local church. To accomplish this, you will be asked a series of questions in a survey which should take approximately 5 minutes to complete. Please consider completing this survey at your earliest convenience as the survey window will close today (2/29/20) at 10pm.

If you have already taken the survey, please disregard this email and THANK YOU so much for your participation.

If you are willing to participate, please read this letter carefully. Then, click the Survey Monkey link below. This will take you to the online survey which will not record any personal information. All information given will be kept private and will only be viewed by the researcher, Zach Pinkerton.

Your participation in this survey is completely voluntary and you may stop participating at any time prior to clicking "submit." Simply close the window. Please understand that any responses published in Zach Pinkerton's professional project will not enable identification of you in any way.

If you have any questions about the survey or how your answers will be used, please call Zach Pinkerton at 419-332-2623 or email zpinkerton@ohiograce.com.

I have read the informed consent letter and I agree to participate.

PLEASE CLICK HERE TO TAKE THIS SURVEY

Sincerely,
Zachary K. Pinkerton
D. Min. Student
Grace Theological Seminary

APPENDIX 2

ADDENDUM 1

Charis Fellowship Survey Questions

Grace College
Informed Consent Form
[Doctor of Ministry]

Principal Investigator: Zach Pinkerton
Title of Study: Women's Roles in the Church: A Policy and Curriculum for Grace Community Church, Fremont, Ohio

You have been invited to participate in a research project titled "*Women's Roles in the Church: A Policy and Curriculum for Grace Community Church, Fremont, Ohio.*" This project will serve as Zach Pinkerton's dissertation for the requirements of the Doctor of Ministry. This consent document will explain the purpose of this research project and will go over all of the time commitments, the procedures used in the study, and the risks and benefits of participating in this research project. Please read this consent form carefully and completely and please ask any questions if you need more clarification.

What are we trying to find out in this study?

The goal of this study is to assist in the formation of a church policy and curriculum to teach the congregation of Grace Community Church in Fremont, Ohio regarding the subject of women's roles within the local church. The information gained from this survey will give insights into where fellow church leaders within the Charis Fellowship are at concerning the subject.

Who can participate in this study?

This survey is designed to study willing Charis Fellowship pastors and paid church staff. Participants must be over the age of 18 to participate in this survey. Those who are not Charis Fellowship pastors or paid staff, or under the age of 18 will be not be used for this project.

Where will this study take place?

This study will be done conveniently online through a safe and secure online platform called: Survey Monkey.

What is the time commitment for participating in this study?

This quick survey should not take more than ten minutes to complete.

What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?

If you choose to participate in this short survey, you will be asked to read thoroughly the informed consent form, as well as answer all questions located on the survey.

What information is being measured during the study?

The information being measured during the study will include basic demographics, as well as the participants' opinion and viewpoints regarding women's roles within ministry.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?

The risks of participating in this survey is very minimal. Some questions may cause slight emotional stress or discomfort due to the sensitivity of the topic in today's culture. All answers are anonymous and cannot be traced back to any specific participant.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?

The benefits of participating in this study include the assistance in creating a policy for Grace Community Church in Fremont, Ohio regarding women's roles within the local church. This survey will also provide crucial insight into the beliefs, values, and opinions on the subject from Charis Fellowship leaders. These insights will then be used to create a customized curriculum, based on Scripture, to be used as a tool by local church pastors.

Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?

There are no costs associated with participating in this survey.

Is there any compensation for participating in this study?

There is no compensation from participating in this survey.

Who will have access to the information collected during this study?

Zach Pinkerton, the researcher, and Dr. Rock LaGioia, the research advisor, will be the only people who will have direct access to the information collected during this study. All information collected will be used to create a policy and curriculum for Grace Community Church and has the potential to be shared within the researcher's professional project.

What if you want to stop participating in this study?

If you want to stop participating in this study, simply close the Survey Monkey page on your browser.

Contacts and Questions – You are encouraged to contact the researcher or the researcher's advisor if you have questions.

Researcher: Zach Pinkerton
 zpinkerton@ohiograce.com
 900 Smith Road
 Fremont, Ohio 43420
 419-332-2623

Research Advisor: Rock M. LaGioia
 lagioir@grace.edu
 200 Seminary Drive
 Winona Lake, IN 46590

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Grace College – Institutional Research Board Office at 574. 372.5100 ext. 6139 or irb@grace.edu

1. Do you agree to the above terms? By clicking Yes, you confirm being at least 18 years old and consent that you are willing to answer the questions in this survey with the data being processed as described above. You must click Yes in order to take the survey.

Yes

No

Charis Fellowship Church Staff Survey Questions:

2. What is your gender?

Male

Female

3. What is your age?

18 to 24

25 to 34

35 to 44

45 to 54

55 to 64

65+

4. How long have you been working in vocational ministry?

5. Are you currently employed by a Charis Fellowship Church? (formerly: Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches)

Yes

No

6. What areas of ministry do you work in?

Lead/Senior Pastor

Discipleship Ministry

Outreach Ministry

Campus Pastor
 Youth Ministry
 Children's Ministry
 Women's Ministry
 Men's Ministry
 Pastoral Care/ Visitation Ministry
 Music/ Worship Ministry
 Creative Arts Ministry
 Tech Ministry
 Finances
 Other

7. What is the size of the average Sunday morning attendance at your local church?

10 to 100
 100 to 300
 300 to 500
 500 to 1000
 1000+

8. Does your church have a set policy regarding women working in ministry?

Yes
 No

If yes, does this policy address women teaching men, and if so, what is that policy?

9. Does your church have women on staff?

Yes
 No

If so, is the title "pastor" given to any of the women on staff?

10. In the past year, have women taught Scripture to both men and women from the Sunday morning pulpit?

Yes, frequently
 Yes, occasionally
 Yes, rarely
 No, not this year, but we have had women teach in the past
 No, never have.

11. In the past year, have women taught Scripture to both men and women in a Sunday School/ABF context?

Yes, frequently

Yes, occasionally

Yes, rarely

No, not this year, but we have had women teach in the past

No, never have

12. In the past year, have women taught Scripture to both men and women in a small group context?

Yes, frequently

Yes, occasionally

Yes, rarely

No, not this year, but we have had women teach in the past

No, never have

13. Do you believe men and women are both equally valued by God?

Yes

No

14. Do you believe men and women play the same roles within the local church?

Yes

No

Why or why not?

15. Do you believe both men and women should be elders within the local church?

Yes

No

Why or why not?

16. Do you believe both men and women should teach within the local church?

Yes

No

Why or why not?

17. Do you believe women should teach men out of Scripture within the local church?

Yes

No

Why or why not?

18. Do you believe the title of "pastor" should be shared by both men and women?

Yes

No

Why or why not?

19. What roles within your local church would you feel comfortable having a woman lead? Check all that apply.

Children's Ministry
Middle School Ministry
High School Ministry
College Ministry
Women's Ministry
Men's Ministry
Technical/ Productions
Communication
Administration
Small Group Ministry (both genders)
Worship Ministry
Family Ministry
Business/ Finance
Senior Pastor
Elder
Deacon

20. Thank you for completing this survey! If you have any more comment as to what you believe regarding the controversial topic of women leading in various roles within the church, please write them down here. Thanks!

ADDENDUM 2

Grace Community Church Membership Survey Questions

Grace College
Informed Consent Form
[Doctor of Ministry]

Principal Investigator: Zach Pinkerton
Title of Study: Women's Roles in the Church: A Policy and Curriculum for Grace Community Church, Fremont, Ohio

You have been invited to participate in a research project titled "*Women's Roles in the Church: A Policy and Curriculum for Grace Community Church, Fremont, Ohio.*" This project will serve as Zach Pinkerton's dissertation for the requirements of the Doctor of Ministry. This consent document will explain the purpose of this research project and will go over all of the time commitments, the procedures used in the study, and the risks and benefits of participating in this research project. Please read this consent form carefully and completely and please ask any questions if you need more clarification.

What are we trying to find out in this study?

The goal of this study is to assist in the formation of a church policy and curriculum to teach the congregation of Grace Community Church in Fremont, Ohio regarding the subject of women's roles within the local church. The information gained from this survey will give insights into where fellow church leaders within the Charis Fellowship are at concerning the subject.

Who can participate in this study?

This survey is designed to study willing Charis Fellowship pastors and paid church staff. Participants must be over the age of 18 to participate in this survey. Those who are not Charis Fellowship pastors or paid staff, or under the age of 18 will be not be used for this project.

Where will this study take place?

This study will be done conveniently online through a safe and secure online platform called: Survey Monkey.

What is the time commitment for participating in this study?

This quick survey should not take more than ten minutes to complete.

What will you be asked to do if you choose to participate in this study?

If you choose to participate in this short survey, you will be asked to read thoroughly the informed consent form, as well as answer all questions located on the survey.

What information is being measured during the study?

The information being measured during the study will include basic demographics, as well as the participants' opinion and viewpoints regarding women's roles within ministry.

What are the risks of participating in this study and how will these risks be minimized?

The risks of participating in this survey is very minimal. Some questions may cause slight emotional stress or discomfort due to the sensitivity of the topic in today's culture. All answers are anonymous and cannot be traced back to any specific participant.

What are the benefits of participating in this study?

The benefits of participating in this study include the assistance in creating a policy for Grace Community Church in Fremont, Ohio regarding women's roles within the local church. This survey will also provide crucial insight into the beliefs, values, and opinions on the subject from Charis Fellowship leaders. These insights will then be used to create a customized curriculum, based on Scripture, to be used as a tool by local church pastors.

Are there any costs associated with participating in this study?

There are no costs associated with participating in this survey.

Is there any compensation for participating in this study?

There is no compensation from participating in this survey.

Who will have access to the information collected during this study?

Zach Pinkerton, the researcher, and Dr. Rock LaGioia, the research advisor, will be the only people who will have direct access to the information collected during this study. All information collected will be used to create a policy and curriculum for Grace Community Church and has the potential to be shared within the researcher's professional project.

What if you want to stop participating in this study?

If you want to stop participating in this study, simply close the Survey Monkey page on your browser.

Contacts and Questions – You are encouraged to contact the researcher or the researcher's advisor if you have questions.

Researcher: Zach Pinkerton
 zpinkerton@ohiograce.com
 900 Smith Road
 Fremont, Ohio 43420
 419-332-2623

Research Advisor: Rock M. LaGioia
lagioir@grace.edu
200 Seminary Drive
Winona Lake, IN 46590

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may contact Grace College – Institutional Research Board Office at 574. 372.5100 ext. 6139 or irb@grace.edu

1. Have you read the above and do you agree to the above terms? By clicking Yes, you confirm being at least 18 years old and consent that you are willing to answer the questions in this survey with the data being processed as described above. You must click Yes in order to take the survey.

Yes

No

2. What is your gender?

Male

Female

3. What is your age?

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-64

65+

4. Which race/ethnicity best describes you? (Please choose only one.)

American Indian or Alaskan Native

Asian / Pacific Islander

Black / African American

Hispanic

White / Caucasian

Multiple Ethnicity / Other (please specify)

5. What is your marital status?

Married

Widowed

Divorced

Separated

Never married

6. How long have you been a Christian?
 - Under 3 years
 - 3-5 years
 - 5-10 years
 - 10-15 years
 - Over 15 years
7. How long have you been attending Grace?
 - Under 3 years
 - 3-5 years
 - 5-10 years
 - 10-15 years
 - Over 15 years
8. Which Grace campus do you attend?
 - Tiffin
 - Fremont
 - Northwood
9. Which Sunday morning service do you more frequently attend?
 - 9:00am Service
 - 10:30am Service
10. Do others in your household call Grace Community Church their home church?
 - Yes
 - No
11. On a scale of 1 (never have) to 10 (every week) how often do ALL members in your household attend Grace?
12. On a scale of 1 (not involved) to 10 (involved multiple times a week) how would you best describe your involvement at Grace?
13. Do you volunteer at Grace at least once each month of the year?
 - Yes
 - No
14. How often do you attend a weekly class or small group?
 - Every week
 - Every month
 - Rarely
 - Never have
15. Have you ever attended a church in the past that had a female pastor?
 - Yes
 - No

16. Do you believe both men and women are equally valued by God?
Strongly agree
Somewhat agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Somewhat disagree
Strongly disagree
17. Do you believe men and women play the same roles within the church?
Strongly agree
Somewhat agree
Neither agree nor disagree
Somewhat disagree
Strongly disagree
18. Do you believe both men and women should serve as deacons within the church?
Yes
No
Why or Why not?
19. Do you believe both men and women should serve as elders within the church?
Yes
No
Why or Why not?
20. Do you believe both men and women should teach within the church?
Yes
No
Why or Why not?
21. Do you believe women should teach men from the Bible within the church?
Yes
No
Why or Why not?
22. Do you believe men should teach women from the Bible within the church?
Yes
No
Why or Why not?
23. Do you believe the title, "pastor" should be used for both men and women?
Yes
No
Why or Why not?

24. Thank you for completing this survey. If you have any more comments as to what you believe regarding the controversial topic of women leading in various roles within the church, please write them down here. Thanks!

APPENDIX 3

Grace Community Church Policy

GRACE COMMUNITY CHURCH

**Policy on Women in Ministry****Value/Worth**

We affirm both men and women are equally created in the image of God (Gen. 1:27) and are all one in Christ. (Gal. 3:28) We recognize Jesus' ministry where He highly valued women, many of those assisting in establishing the newly formed church. God's equal love for both man and woman has been clearly demonstrated to us. (Rom. 5:8)

Women have played an important role within history. We recognize women's achievements in both the Old and New Testaments, as well as in church history.

Roles

We recognize role distinctions among men and women in church leadership.

- We believe that the leadership position in our local church corresponding to the biblical role of elder/overseer is reserved for men who meet biblical qualifications. (Titus 1, 1 Tim. 3, 1 Pet. 5)
- We believe that the title of "pastor" in our culture be only associated with men who are formally elders/overseers of the local church. (Titus 1, 1 Tim. 3, 1 Pet. 5)
- We believe that women may serve as deaconesses. (1 Tim. 3)

Function

We affirm that women can and should hold leadership positions within the church, excluding those of elder/overseer/pastor.

We affirm that men are to be the leaders within Christ's body, as they are the head of women. (1 Cor. 11) This leadership role is seen all the way back in the creation account. (Gen. 2-3)

We affirm that women have the opportunity to receive the spiritual gift of teaching (Eph. 4; Rom. 12) and that they should be free to use their spiritual gifts within the boundaries of Scripture. Women can be naturally gifted and should use their gifts of teaching to teach fellow women and children. (Titus 2)

Practical implications

- No pastor or leader of Grace Community Church should allow a woman to preach or teach out of Scripture within a class or small group consisting of men or teenage males. (1 Tim. 2)
- No pastor or leader of Grace Community Church should knowingly allow a woman to preach or teach out of Scripture to men or teenage males at a function associated with the church.
 - Conferences
 - Retreats
 - Bible studies
 - Etc.
- No pastor or leader of Grace Community Church should knowingly take men or teenagers to an event where women are preaching God's Word.
- Grace Community Church is advised not to support a church planter or missionary who identifies as a female elder/overseer.

Women are encouraged to teach women.

Men are encouraged to teach men.

When both men and women are present, men are to step up and lead.

APPENDIX 4

Curriculum Week 1



Women in Ministry: *Created Equals*

SCRIPTURE:

READ: Genesis 1:26-31

God made both Adam and Eve in the image of God, and He declared it was **VERY GOOD!**

READ: Galatians 3:25-29

God doesn't value us based on our race, position in society, or sex. His value on us is based on what Christ did on the cross.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What do you think it means to be *made in the image of God*?
2. Why do you think God declared that His creation of man *and* woman was very good?
3. What does this say about our worth? (equal)
4. How do you feel Adam and Eve felt about each other knowing that they were equal in value and worth?

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Both man and woman were made in the image of God.

God declared both man and woman VERY GOOD!

Man and woman were created equal in worth.

God places His value on us, based on Christ's sacrifice on the cross.

Curriculum Week 2



Women in Ministry: *The Beginning*

SCRIPTURE:

READ: Genesis 2:7-9; 15-25

God made Adam to take care of the garden. It was not good for Adam to be alone, so God formed Eve out of Adam, as a *helper* to him.

READ: Genesis 3:1-24

Satan deceived Eve, and she sinned first. She then gave the fruit to Adam to eat.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why do you think God created Adam?
2. Why did God have Adam name all the animals? What was Adam's conclusion once he was done?
3. Why did God form Eve out of Adam?
4. Why do you think Satan chose to deceive Eve?
5. Why did both Adam and Eve hide?

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Adam was created first.

God created Eve for Adam.

God created Adam and Eve equal, yet different.

Adam had the authority to name the animals, and Eve.

God named the human race "man."

Satan chose to deceive Eve. Adam willingly rebelled.

When God shows up, He calls out for Adam, not Eve.

Curriculum Week 3



Women in Ministry: *Jesus' Example*

SCRIPTURE:

READ: Mark 3:13-19

Jesus came as a man and chose 12 men to lead His church.

READ: John 4:7-30

Samaritans and Jews didn't get along. Culturally men and women weren't supposed to speak to each other in public. Even this sinful woman's own people seemed to avoid her, yet Jesus broke all 3 of these cultural rules because He valued this foreign, mistake-prone woman.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why do you think Jesus came as a man?
2. Why did Jesus only pick men to be His main disciples?
3. How do you think this woman felt, as Jesus took the time to talk to her?
4. What surprised the disciples? Why?

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Jesus came as a man.

Jesus chose 12 male disciples.

Jesus frequently broke cultural norms.

Jesus cared for men and women equally.

Curriculum Week 4



Women in Ministry: *Marriage Relationship*

SCRIPTURE:

READ: Ephesians 5:22-33

God created the marriage relationship but gives us some practical ways to make it work best.

READ: Colossians 3:18-19

Wives be subject to husbands.

Husbands love wives.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What does it mean: the husband is the head of the wife?
2. Why does God want wives to be subject to their husbands?
3. How are husbands supposed to love their wives? What does that look like?
4. Why does Paul quote Genesis 2 when talking about marriage?

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

The husband is the head of the wife.

Wives are to be subject to their husbands.

Husbands are to love their wives.

God created men to lead in the home.

Curriculum Week 5



Women in Ministry: *Teaching within the Church*

SCRIPTURE:

READ: 1 Timothy 2:9-15

Women are to be modest and known for their good works

Women should not teach or exercise authority over a man in the church

Paul gives 2 reasons:

1. Adam was created first
2. Eve was deceived

READ: Titus 2:3-5

Older women are to teach younger women

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How should women conduct themselves at church?
2. What is a church worship service/ gathering?
3. What does it mean to teach?
4. What is a man?

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

Women are encouraged to learn alongside men.

Women are not to teach men out of scripture in a church gathering.

Adam was created first.

Eve was deceived.

Older women are to teach younger women.

Curriculum Week 6



Women in Ministry: *Who Should Lead?*

SCRIPTURE:

READ: 1 Timothy 3:1-13

There are 2 main offices of the church: overseers & deacons.

Not every man is to be a leader in the church, only those who meet Paul's rigid qualifications.

Our church believes women can be deacons and serve as deaconesses.

READ: Titus 1:5-9

There are many qualifications for church leaders.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Does God want us to lead in the church?
2. Why does God want primarily men to lead His church?
3. Why does God give us so many qualifications for leadership roles?

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

God desires for men to lead in the church.

God takes leadership within the church seriously.

Not all men are to be leaders in the church.

There are many qualifications for church leadership.

Women may be deaconesses.

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