



## THEOLOGY OF MINISTRY WOMEN IN MINISTRY

### **INTRODUCTION - COMPLEMENTARIANISM VS EGALITARIANISM**

The roles of men and women is a hot topic today in discussions about family, the workplace, society at large around the world, and in the church. I remember the first time I heard the words, "complementarian" and "egalitarian" at a church picnic when I was a first year seminary student back in 2008. Our pastor, whom I had just recently met, told my seminarian friend and me that issues of "complementarianism" and "egalitarianism" were increasingly being discussed and debated in the church, even in the PCA. My response was, "Mmmmm yes, I was wondering when this day would come." And I said that because I had no idea what those words meant. I was a first year student. We did not get into that stuff till 3rd year Systematics, but I went home and did some homework and learned what this stuff was.

These are not terms you find anywhere in the Bible. They are terms that began being used just over 30 years ago to describe a concept seen in the Bible.

### **RESOURCES**

We're going to discuss in detail women and church leadership and whether women can hold the office of elder and/or deacon and what roles women can have in the church. Those are very good, worthwhile questions. We need to ask them and discuss them and run to the Bible to answer them. That said, in all of this, if our main concern in the church is, who has authority, who is in charge, we 100% have the wrong priority. JRR Tolkien, who was a Roman Catholic, in a hierarchical system, said in one of his letters, "The most improper job of any man, even saints, is bossing other men. Not one in a million is fit for it, and least of all those who seek the opportunity." When Jesus' disciples start fighting over which of them will have the most authority in Jesus' kingdom (these

are Jesus' future apostles and foundation of the church) he looks at them and says in Mt 20, *"You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. 26 It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, 28 even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."* So these are very very good and worthwhile questions that NEED to be discussed and answered biblically and robustly. AND, our questions about polity, elders and deacons (male or female), church courts, church power, Presbyterianism - those questions are not the end all be all of our faith.

I've learned a lot more since my first year of seminary about these topics and men and women's roles in the church and in the family and in society.

### **Original Definitions**

Complementarian - The ordained officers in the church should be male only.

Egalitarian - The ordained officers in the church can be male or female.

These are not terms you find anywhere in the Bible. They are terms that began being used just over 30 years ago to describe a concept seen in the Bible.

### **Redefining "Complementarian"**

Over the years, the term "complementarian" came to take on a new meaning expressing all kinds of differences between men and women. Certain complementarians began saying that men and women have different natures and that the differing roles of men and women are central teachings in the Bible and vitals of the faith - that men need to be more manly; that women need to be more submissive; that wives should not have a vote in the church; that any schooling but homeschooling is sinful; that dating is sinful; etc. What was once thought to be solely a matter of ordained office in the church was now being conceived as issues regarding authority that pertain to all areas of life. The conclusion among certain complementarians was that women are not fit to hold any authority. Today, it is not enough to say that God has chosen some men to hold the ordained offices in the church; you have to hold all these other views about men and women. Some would say there are "hard" complementarians who hold all these newer formulations of the roles of men and women and "soft"

complementarians who hold to the original concept of complementarianism (that ordained officers in the church should be male only). With all these changes and the suspicion and anger amongst those who disagree it is questionable whether the terms complementarian and egalitarian remain helpful.

### **Against “Hard” Complementarianism**

In Genesis 1 and 2 both man and woman, individually and independent of each other, are made in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27). Both men and women are given dominion over creation (Gen 1:26, 28). Both men and women are given the responsibility to multiply and fill the earth with generations of people.

Nowhere does it say that men and women are created ontologically different, that is, with different natures. They are both created with human nature as man and woman. This is the same human nature that the Son of God takes on in the incarnation in order to redeem humankind, both men and women. Jesus is able to save both men and women, even though he is a man and not a woman, because as a man he shares the same human nature as both man and woman.

The New Testament is addressed to men and women equally. We can't take the few commands that are addressed to men and the few that are addressed to women to understand everything that is addressed to the church. Both men and women are the image of God and are sanctified by the Holy Spirit to be more and more Christ-like.

Galatians 3:28-29 says, *“28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.”* This does not only relate to justification. All the promises of the New Covenant belong to men and women equally.

The only time the regular word in Greek (ἐξουσία) for “authority” in the New Testament is used in regards to marriage is in 1Cor 7:4, *“The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.”* That is a mutual authority between husband and wife.

In Ephesians 6:1, 2, Paul commands children, *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord,*

*for this is right...*" and then he quotes the 5th commandment given to Israel at Mt. Sinai: *"Honor your father and mother."* The dad and mom have equal authority over the children in both the New Testament and the Old Testament. There is no hierarchy the children are supposed to observe with regard to their dad and mom.

In Ephesians 5 wives are told to submit to their husbands. But, women are never commanded to submit to men in general. Submission is only spoken of in marriage (the reason for which we discuss below). Husbands are never told to command their wives like they were children. Husbands are never told to make their wives submit; that is a role wives assume voluntarily. Husbands are commanded to love their wives the way Jesus loved the church and to lay down their lives for their wives.

While there is an ordinary, permanent office of teaching in the church, there is also a general role for all Christians in the church to teach one another. Romans 15:14, *"I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another."* The "my brothers" in the Greek is inclusive and shorthand for "brothers and sisters." The context indicates that Paul is addressing the whole church about their ability to be teaching one another. As well, Paul says in Titus 2 that older women are to instruct younger women but that verse alone can't be used to restrict women teaching in the church. In the very next verse Paul says that Titus is to instruct the younger men to be self-controlled but no one argues that that encompasses and restricts all that Titus is to teach.

### **Occasion of Biblical Complementarianism**

The New Testament does describe and prescribe certain roles for certain men that are excluded to other men and all women in the church. This means that there was an "egalitarian" misunderstanding in the New Testament church itself that needed to be addressed. The early church understood that with Jesus' coming and the inauguration of the New Covenant things were different. There was a transition from the Old Covenant under which God organized and constituted his people as a geopolitical theocratic kingdom to the New Covenant under which God constitutes and organizes his people as a family. But, people in the early church mistakenly assumed that any order or any difference in roles between men and women belonged solely to that old order and no longer applied to the New Covenant order. This is understandable. We could conceive of this as an "over-realized eschatological" misunderstanding with

regards to church polity (we will return to this below in our discussion of the Old Testament Judge Deborah).

## **WOMEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH - 1 CORINTHIANS AND 1 TIMOTHY**

There are three passages in the New Testament that must be considered in determining that this order and difference in roles between some men and women persists in the New Covenant church.<sup>1</sup>

### **Orienting Observations on All Three Passages**

Paul is an inspired Apostle and he intends and therefore God intends an absolute and perpetual exclusion of women from ordained office that is binding until Christ's return, that is, binding for the entire history of the church.

The issue in these passages is if there is an exclusion of women from ordained office, and if so - is that exclusion temporary or permanent? All three passages are didactic and therefore legislative, that is, they prescribe. AND, all three passages are historically conditioned, that is, they are occasional. They are addressed to specific problems in a specific time and place. That occasional factor, that historically conditioned factor, in no way prevents these passages from containing teaching of enduring validity. It does not follow that to have shown the historically qualified character of a passage that you have therefore immediately disqualified it from having any persisting ongoing validity.

So how are we to distinguish within these passages between abiding norms and what may be temporary?

None of these passages *explicitly* addresses the question of women's ordination. For instance, in 1Cor 11 the issue is women praying and prophesying IN PUBLIC but nothing is said there about office or ordination explicitly. Similarly, in 1Cor 14 and 1Tim 2 (and 3) the issue is women speaking in church.

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<sup>1</sup> The following exegesis of 1Cor 11:2-16; 14:33-36; and 1Tim 2:8-15 is taken directly from Richard Gaffin's two lectures, "Women and Church Office, Part 1 - Part:21 of 34" and "Women and Church Office, Part 2 - Part:22 of 34," *Westminster Theological Seminary* (Philadelphia, PA). Recorded 1987.  
<https://students.wts.edu/resources/media>

The conclusion that has taken hold in the church is that 1Cor 14 and 1Tim 2 exclude women from ordained office as an apparently unavoidable a priori inference. The traditional position is that these passages don't explicitly address ordination of women or office but by inference.

### 1 CORINTHIANS 11:2-16 (Key Verses 5 and 13)

First, the plain suggestion is that women praying/prophecy in public meetings of the church are recognized and accepted practices by Paul. There is nothing here that intimates disapproval by Paul. You have the same language describing men doing this in v.4 with no disapproval.

Second, Paul repeats his reference to women praying at a different point in his argument when he is summing up. This suggests that Paul understands this to be an approved practice rather than simply a concession of sorts.

Third, Paul is not talking about private activities. Clearly these are public gatherings. And to that we can say the notion of private prophecy is a contradiction in terms. Everything that follows in chs.12 through 14 is about spiritual gifts being given for the common good of the church itself.

**Conclusion** - These verses imply, in some form, that prayer and prophecy by women was an accepted practice in the churches known to Paul (cf. v16; Acts 24:9).

Note - whatever the head of covering is, it is a sign of authority that is picked up out of the sequence that the head of the woman is man. The issue seems to be between husband and wife and not men and women in general. The head covering in 1st century Roman society was a sign of marriage. For the wife to appear without a head covering might suggest sexual availability or simply being unmarried. A contemporary parallel would be a wife coming to church without her wedding ring. Likewise Paul says men are not to pray with their heads covered which was a pagan practice in which men in worshipful piety to their pagan gods would pull parts of their togas over their heads. As with prayer and prophecy everything in worship is to be done orderly.

## 1 CORINTHIANS 14:33-36

First, it is not as clear as some think what Paul is intending to forbid here. The passage does seem to present a sweeping prohibition of women speaking in church. But 1Cor 11 clearly implies that some women were praying and prophesying publicly in church with Paul's approval. And we're assuming Paul does not contradict himself and that these are the actual words of Paul here in ch.11 and ch.14. It follows that ch.11 limits the seemingly absolute sweeping prohibition that we have in ch.14.

How exactly is the prohibition of ch.14 to be limited is not easy to answer. The verses in the immediate surrounding context in ch.14 prohibit women specifically from participating in authoritative judging or evaluating a prophetic utterance. The primary issue in the chapter is tongues and prophecy and their relationship to one another. The fact remains that the prohibition must be limited in view of what Paul approves of in 1Cor 11.

Second, with that surrounding context in mind of ch.11, the passage in 14:33-36 must have something to do with tongues and prophecy. These four verses are not a tangent or parenthesis. Whatever the precise meaning of these verses, they are related to the exercise of prophecy and tongues. And in connection to that, it may also be said that prophecy and tongues are revelatory gifts that are confined to the apostolic age. We are brought to the conclusion that these verses, along with 1 Cor 11:2-16, address a particular set of issues in an apostolic church situation that by God's design no longer exists. What is said here about the exercise of prophecy and tongues is not directly applicable to the church today because those special revelatory gifts have ceased.

**Conclusion** - This passage and the 1 Cor 11:5 and 13 passage have no direct bearing on the issue of women's ordination.

## 1 TIMOTHY 2:8-15

This passage does differ significantly from the previous two.

First, we have to be clear about our hermeneutical approach. There are hard exegetical uncertainties here.

- Is Paul addressing behavior in the assembly of the church or for all of life?
- Why is Paul appealing to creation and the fall in vv.13 and 14? Why does he refer to the order of creation? Adam was created first - so what?
- Why is Paul pointing out that Eve was deceived?
- What does the reference to be saved by child-bearing in v.15 mean?
- What do we do with the rest of Scripture where women teach men? Just a few examples: In the Old Testament Sarah instructs Abraham three times and at least one of those times God instructs Abraham to listen to his wife. In Judges 4 Deborah is the Judge and Prophet of Israel leading Israel at that time. Abigail teaches King David. In the New Testament Priscilla teaches Apollos.

These are all difficult questions. That said, it does not follow that we cannot draw conclusions from the commands in vv.11 and 12 or that it is arbitrary to do so. If you extend that kind of hermeneutical approach to Scripture as a whole because there are some things difficult to understand as Peter says in 2Pet 3:16 then nothing that it teaches is clear. With all that remains hard about this passage, it is clear that Paul bases the commands of 12 and 13 not on some contemporary situation of concern - but rather on the basis of an order that was established in creation that persists even after the fall. Paul therefore intends that as long as the present creation order exists these commands continue in force. We have to appreciate that creation and fall are fundamental structures of Pauline teaching as a whole (cf. Rom 5 and 1Cor 15 and the work of Christ in relation to Adam).

**Mid-Conclusion** - There is a prohibition that is intended by Paul to continue as long as the present order continues.

What is the prohibition?

First, what the pastoral epistles (like 1, 2 Timothy) do is embody apostolic provision for the post apostolic future of the church, particularly as the pastorals order aspects of church life for that coming time, as Paul puts it, until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1Tim 6:14).



Note - The Apostle Paul's early writings are all about how God delivers us from sin and brings us into a life of faith and freedom and being filled with the Spirit. Paul's later writings concentrate on building and constructing the temple of the visible church. This shift in Paul's focus, from his early to his later writings, reflects the larger theme of how God establishes his kingdom - our King first conquers and then he builds his palace temple. This Biblical theme is played out in creation, the Exodus, David and Solomon's respective reigns, and in the Book of Acts. Jesus' commission to the apostles to take the gospel to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8) is accomplished by the end of the Book of Acts. The gospel having conquered to the end of the earth, Jesus then builds his visible church via his apostle Paul's final letters where he is concerned specifically with the building of the visible church.

Second, 1Tim 2:8-15 belongs to the larger section that is 2:1-3:16. The controlling concern of this section is explicitly stated at the end of the section in 3:14-15: *"I am writing these things to you so that, if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God."* Paul's overall concern in his prohibition in 2:8-15 and in his provision in 3:1-13 is how we as the church should behave in gathered worship.

Paul's concern throughout this passage is behavior in the assembly of gathered worship. So when Paul says in 2:8, *"I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands..."* - he is speaking of ministers who lead in prayer in the assembly. The "in every place" is everywhere the church gathers. When Paul speaks of women dressing modestly he is not prohibiting women from ever wearing fancy clothes. He is saying it is not appropriate to come to worship that way where you have mostly poor people.

Third, right after our passage within this larger section Paul goes on to immediately deal with the permanent ordained offices of the church beginning with the qualifications of the office of overseer elder in 3:1-7 (cf. Titus 1:5-9) and then the office of deacon in 3:8-13. So in the flow of discourse in 3:1ff Paul is ordering and making positive provision for the teaching and rule and authoritative service that he has just prohibited to women at the end of ch.2.

This provides an important qualification to the commands in 2:11 and 12. We already saw in 1Cor 11 that that passage limits the apparently absolute imposition of silence on women that is found in 1Cor 14. In keeping with that limitation together with 1Tim 3:1ff suggests that the prohibition of 2:11 and 12 concerns the prohibiting of women specifically from exercising the teaching and ruling functions reserved to the office of elder and the authoritative service functions reserved to the office of deacon. What is prohibited specifically to women in this passage is that exercise of teaching and rule and authoritative service reserved to the ordained offices. Thus, women are not to be ordained<sup>2</sup> as elders or deacons.

The focus is on the assembly and Paul is speaking of the authority of office in the assembly. So when you teach in the assembly that's a call to office and there is an authority involved. The "remaining quiet" is not a general reference to all women remaining quiet before all men. It is referring to listening to those who have been called and ordained with spiritual authority in the church.

Fourth, we must consider the important substructure of Paul's argument of this passage which explains his use of Gen 2 and 3. That substructure is the unique analogy that exists between church and family. The church is an extension of the family as the church is patterned after the family. What is controlling Paul's thinking is that the basic form and role of relationships established in the home has a carry over into the church. This principle follows - the officers are to the rest of the church as the husband/father is to the wife/children of the family. This substructure is rooted in covenant theology and reflects a parallel throughout Scripture, found again and again between the family and the church and in the Old Testament between the family and the covenant community as a whole. This parallel is unlike any other human institutions. What is the apex of redemptive blessing of the covenant? It is adoption into God's family. It is to be sons and

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<sup>2</sup> Upon election, the candidate for office must be formally set apart to office by a court of the church. This setting apart to office is called "ordination." The PCA's Book of Church Order defines ordination as "the authoritative admission of one duly called to an office in the Church of God, accompanied with prayer and the laying on of hands, to which it is proper to add the giving of the right hand of fellowship." Ordination has its roots in the OT and it is carried over into the NT. You can see this process played out in the NT on numerous occasions (cf. Acts 6:2-6; 13:2-5; 1Tim 4:13-15; 2Tim 1:6). Ordination is not a sacrament. The laying on of hands does not confer graces or gifts to the candidate to equip him for ministry. That said, when ordination is carried out faithfully we should expect that Christ will bless his gift for the purpose he gives it - to bless his church. Ordination confers authority. It commissions and authorizes a person to do a specific task.

daughters of the living God. The inestimable privilege of calling God our Father. That covenant context carries into our passage. While it is true that not every woman is a wife or mother, every woman is a daughter as it is the case that every male is a son. The officers then are the fathers in God's household. This is appreciated in reformed theology alone.

**Conclusion** - 1Tim 2 addresses the issue of the ordination of women as elders and deacons; not explicitly, but in the context, and unmistakably, in a rather specific way. This really is the only passage in the New Testament to do so.

Broadly speaking, there is an impressive paucity of biblical evidence for or against women's ordination to office of elder and deacon. This is not a matter of propriety or common sense as our beloved John Calvin put it and therefore gets wrong. It is also not the case as another reformer Donald Macleod put it that, "The woman is not constitutionally fitted to be the asserter, maintainer, and defender of the Christian faith." It is not the case that men are relatively more important than women or that women are more susceptible to temptation. Until we see this unbiblical premise of the ontology of women we're going to have a hard time understanding what the Bible says in prohibiting women's ordination to office. And we need to see that because of our place in our own culture and history each of us is under the influence to a degree to that Lewisian chronological snobbery - "The uncritical acceptance of the intellectual climate common to our own age and the assumption that whatever has gone out of date is on that account discredited. You must find why it went out of date. Was it ever refuted (and if so by whom, where, and how conclusively) or did it merely die away as fashions do? If the latter, this tells us nothing about its truth or falsehood. From seeing this, one passes to the realization that our own age is also "a period," and certainly has, like all periods, its own characteristic illusions. They are likeliest to lurk in those widespread assumptions which are so ingrained in the age that no one dares to attack or feels it necessary to defend them." -CS Lewis, Surprised by Joy, pp.207-208.

## THE "WHY?" WHY THE PROHIBITION?

Why should that ordained spiritual authority of office belong only to men in the church?

This is why Paul appeals to creation. When he appeals to Eve being tempted first he is NOT suggesting that Eve was created gullible as if she was not capable of discerning deep truth. It is the order of creation that matters. Adam was created first and yet Satan went after Eve to tempt and deceive her. And yet, it was Adam that was tasked as covenant head of mankind. Adam is the one given the task regarding the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and protecting the garden of Eden (Gen 2:15-17). He was made first for this responsibility. So when Satan came to Eve she should have deferred to Adam because Adam was created with this responsibility.

Paul's point is that God entered into that Covenant of Works with Adam and Adam represented all mankind for good or bad. God did not appoint Eve as covenant head and Satan knows this. Thus, Satan subverts the order God has established in going to Eve rather than going to the covenant head. Satan ignored God's order which established who had spiritual authority in the garden of Eden. And, not only did Satan ignore that order but then Eve ignored that order as well. Paul's point is not that Eve was deceived because of her gullible nature (she had the same nature as Adam). Paul's point is that both Satan and Eve ignored God's order for who was in charge of the Covenant of Works. They both ignored the one whom God ordained with spiritual authority and responsibility.

### **What If?**

What if Eve had deferred to Adam's God-given role and authority and allowed him to contend with Satan? And, what if Adam had successfully resisted Satan's temptation, not been deceived, and then judged and expelled the devil from the garden? What if? Had Eve and Adam both been faithful, they still had to complete the cultural commission given to them by God to fill the earth and subdue it (note this commission was given to both Adam and Eve, cf. Gen 1:26-28). Which raises the very good question - how would Adam's authority over the growing number of the people of God multiplying and spreading over all the earth across the millennia of years be carried out as they successfully fill and subdue the earth?

From the beginning there was a form of government in place which was the family structure. In the beginning there was no difference between the family and the people of God. The holy family was the citizens of the city of God in Eden. There was no distinction between them. So as the one holy covenant community grew the city grew.

And the family authority structure would then just be carried over and developed in the polity of the city. Though it may seem obvious it needs to be stated that right from the outset you have the family institution. Adam and Eve are created not just a man and a woman but are created as husband and wife. Right from the outset this is the names they are given at creation; names that relate them in terms of marriage relations. So there is this legal covenantal bond, which is this institutional family bond that God ordains. It was within this marital relationship of legal fidelity that the procreation function of the cultural commission was to be fulfilled. The cultural commission then was a family mandate, in the sense that it was to be performed by mankind acting as a family. This cultural commission was not going to be a bunch of lone rangers off on their own doing their own thing. It was the family as a family expanding and fulfilling the cultural mandate of filling and ruling the earth.

But also it was a family mandate in the sense that the goal of the whole thing was the production of the kingdom family. The goal was the city of the royal human family, not just the royal human race, but the royal human family filling and ruling the earth (that's the goal of the original cultural commission). Note - that family identification of the covenant community remains with us throughout the rest of the Scripture.

The big point - the original covenant family was not without its divinely appointed government. There is an authority structure here within the family. That authority comes to expression in the parent-child relationship. Thus the later requirement for children to honor their parents would have had a proper place right from the beginning. There was an authority structure there in the Eden paradise.

And, there is the authority structure in the husband-wife relationship. When the first woman is created to be the wife of the first man she is given the role as "helper" (Gen 2:18). In no way is that a derogatory role or sub role. Both God the Father and God the Holy Spirit are described with same term and as having the role of "helper" of their people (Ex 18:4; Dt 33:7, 29; Hos 13:9; Psa 20:3; 70:6; 89:20; 121:1-2; 124:8; 146:5). Men and women are created with different roles by God's design as he says in Gen 2:18, *"It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him."* The literal translation of "fit for him" is "like, opposite him." The care of the wife assigned to the husband in the marriage ordinance was attended by an appropriate marital authority.

Within the family you do have such an authority structure and that would have characterized the whole city of God as it moved out across the world.

The answer to the "what if?" is that each family unit of the branch of the covenant family would exhibit the marital and the parental authority pattern. The covenant institution as a whole would be the complex of these individual family authority structures. The father heads of the families would have served as the heads of the whole government structure. (Spoiler - This is a principle of polity that has proven to be a constant in the determination of the form of the covenant. The total covenant community is made up of individual family units.)

### **But Here's What Really Happened**

The Fall happened. And, with the Fall the cultural commission changed and the family institution and the people of God became distinct institutions populated by broken sinners. And thus, with the Fall the family, marriage, and the household of God suffered.

So trying to start a family through the process of having children is frustrated and beset with difficulty following the Fall.

The relationship between husbands and wives is marked by struggle and conflict following the Fall. The same language in the last part of Gen 3:16 when God says to Eve, "*Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you*" - is found again in Gen 4:7 when God warns, Cain, the first child of Adam and Eve, that his sin is going to destroy him if he doesn't repent of it. God says to Cain, "*Sin is crouching at the door. Its desire is for you, but you must rule over it.*" As a result of the Fall God's ordained roles for husbands to lead their wives and for wives to help their husbands will be frustrated. Generally speaking, rather than laying down their lives and leading their wives sacrificially (Eph 5:25), husbands will rule over their wives and households in a harsh manner. (Not in a one to one sense, but similar to the way Cain should harshly, strictly "rule" over his own sin, Gen 4:7). Likewise, generally speaking, rather than helping their husbands lead sacrificially (Eph 5:22), wives will "desire" to master their husbands in a controlling manner. (Not in a one to one sense, but similar to the way Cain's sin "desires" to master Cain in a controlling manner, Gen 4:7).

However, the good news, as rehearsed by Paul, is that while "*14 the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. 15 Yet she will be saved through childbearing.*"

That is, the people of God, as an institution, persisted and all through Eve's childbearing unto the Second Adam, the new covenant head appointed by God (Gen 3:15). As God appointed a man to represent mankind in the beginning, so God sent a man, Jesus Christ, as the covenant head tasked with overcoming the devil and with peopling the earth with a new covenant family.

The question Paul is answering in 1 Tim 2:1-3:15 is not the "what if" - it is the "so what?" Now that Jesus has accomplished his defeat of Satan, how is his authority over the growing number of the people of God multiplying and spreading over all the earth across the millennia of years to be carried out as we successfully fill the earth? The answer in parallel fashion is through the spiritual authority of the ordained heads of the worldwide church family - the officers of elders and deacons. In fact, ever since the Fall the Son of God preserved the community of the faithful and always organized them by the family and its authority structure. This was true from Adam to the specially organized theocratic kingdom of Israel which was a complex of families.

1Tim 2-3 is not a prohibition of women from ever teaching men. It is a prohibition against ignoring those men whom God has tasked with spiritual authority in the church family. This is why women can teach men outside the authority of office. This is why Sarah could instruct Abraham on three different occasions. This is why Abigail could instruct King David while still respecting him as the king. This is why Priscilla could teach Apollos while still respecting his calling.

### **What About 1 Peter 3:1-7?**

The chapter begins with "Likewise" and context is everything here - Peter is still describing the lifestyle of Christian pilgrims in this world. Christian wives are free; they are co-heirs with Christ; royal people of God; free in slavery to God; free as followers of Christ; free to submit themselves to others. Think of Jesus, his status and honor, yet he submits himself freely to wash the disgusting feet of Peter just as the lowest slave of the house would AND YET that was simply nothing compared to Jesus bowing before the cross bearing the weight of Peter's sins.

Peter is calling Christian wives to submit to their husbands because it is their role in marriage given them by God, thinking particularly of Christian women married to non-Christian men. In his commentary on 1 Peter Edmund Clowney says of this passage:

“Christian wives can have an important part in the church's witness. That witness may not be easy. Their husbands have resisted the claims of the gospel. They may ridicule the message and insult their wives. So strong may be their hostility that it is no longer possible for their wives to speak of the Lord to them. Even then the Christian wife must not despair. She still possesses a mighty weapon for winning her husband to the faith; it is the testimony of her life. Her husband has refused to heed the word; very well, let him be won without words. The silent eloquence of his wife's pure and reverent behavior can preach daily the transforming power of Jesus Christ. No-one could be more emphatic than Peter has been about the place of the word of God in conversion (1:23). Yet there are situations in which the silent witness of Christian love must support and prepare for the presentation of the truth.”

### **What About Deborah The Judge In The Old Testament?**

How can a woman hold the office of judge in the Old Testament and rule over the entire people of Israel? In the case of Deborah (and Samuel) you have the combination of offices of judge and prophet. The one who held the office of judge simultaneously held the office of prophet. The judges were prophets. In the case of the priests and kings there was a divine special appointment of the founder of the priesthood and the founder of the ongoing Davidic dynasty. But, subsequent to that founding election there was a principle of genealogical succession for both the priesthood and Davidic kingly dynasty. But with the case of the prophets and the judges these offices were not passed down through the family. The offices of the judge and the prophet were a matter of individual divine appointment. Each individual judge and each individual prophet was raised up and selected by God (Deut 18).

Deborah is clearly a prophetess. In Judges 4 we read how Deborah delivered Israel from the Canaanites. In Judges 5 we read about this same deliverance but from the perspective of heaven itself. We read how Deborah herself experienced the heavenly council of God (cf. 5:23). Deborah has a vision of the heavenly council and she sees the Angel of the Lord pronouncing judgment on the tribes of Israel who refused to volunteer their service in the battle against the Canaanites. Deborah is a messenger of that divine council; she has knowledge of that heavenly council.

How are we to understand Deborah's role in ministry? One major feature of the office of prophet was God himself selecting and raising up the prophet in order to form the



prophet. God's forming of the prophet included: divine appointment of the prophet; the prophet being caught up into the heavenly presence of God; and the anointing of the prophet with the Holy Spirit. What happens when an individual, like the prophet, is caught up into God's glory presence is that individual is recreated to reflect that glory. This is what it is to be recreated in the image of God. The image of God is the reflection of God's threefold glory. Thus, the prophet being recreated in the image of God includes the 1) glory of dominion - possessing a real dominion over creation like working miracles. The threefold glory includes the 2) glory of moral excellence - possessing ethical holiness. And, the threefold glory includes the 3) glory of visible luminosity - possessing a physical, visible brilliance like Moses' shining face after his encounter with God's presence.

The transformation of the prophet in the forming of the prophet is a transformation on a consummation scale. The prophets are pictured as being transformed into the image of God not just in the particular ways that we might experience today but on a scale that is more akin to the consummation of the age. For instance, while we in the church are being transformed more and more in terms of our dominion over creation and our ethical holiness - the physical glorification aspect of the prophets' forming takes it beyond our present experience of being recreated in God's image. This physical glorification is truly a foretaste of that resurrection awesomeness and beauty that comes at the consummation of history when we are raised physically from the dead and transformed in glory.

But, do we read about Deborah's physical appearance shining with the glory of God's light? No. But, what aspect of her physical glorification is clearly communicated? It is this - we know that in with the heavenly consummation the present distinctions of male and female exercise of spiritual authority or lack of exercise of spiritual authority in the church will be obviated in the new heavens and new earth. It will disappear. There will be no marrying or giving in marriage in heaven in the age to come (Mt 22:30). So such distinctions as are now relevant in the authority structure of the church and family cease to be so in heaven because of the disappearance of the sharp male, female roles that presently persist. So, in the same vein of what Moses' shining face points to, the case of Deborah, the prophetess, is prophetic of the way things will be in the age to come and not normative for the way things are in the present church age.

## WOMEN IN THE CHURCH FAMILY

### What Can Women Do In The Church?

First, in the church women are co-heirs of the grace of life (1Pet 3:7; Gal 3:28); women are a part of the unity of the Spirit, the fellowship of the Spirit (Eph 4:3, Phil 2:1); and women have been baptized with the Spirit (Acts 2:17; 1Cor 12:13). So how may women, as those co-heirs with life baptized with the Spirit, give legitimate expression in the congregation to the Biblical insights and discernments they too have received from the Holy Spirit?

Second, to answer the question, sessions (and presbyteries and the General Assembly) ought to consider ways to make greater use of the teaching gifts and service of women in the total life of the church including the use of those gifts in public assemblies. Such exercise of teaching gifts and service is to be encouraged as long as such teaching and service does not subvert the good order of the church by replacing or undermining the teaching and rule of the elders and service of the deacons.

### WOMEN AND STAFF IN THE CHURCH

In our effort to govern Jesus' church faithfully as an officer-led church we also want to consider the appropriateness of financially compensating certain members, whether they be men or women, who labor in the work of ministry. We have to admit that there is also a paucity of explicit biblical evidence for paying our pastors. The most explicit reference is 1 Tim 5:17-18: "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain,' and, 'The laborer deserves his wages.'"<sup>3</sup> Paul quotes from the Old Testament Law, Deut 25:4, and applies it to the

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<sup>3</sup> 1 Tim 5:17 is translated in the ESV: "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching." One translation issue that must be addressed is the translating of the Greek word *diplous* as "double." Old Testament scholar Meredith Kline addresses this translation issue in his essay, "Double Trouble." "If we speak of the double of something, we might have in mind either twice its amount or its twin. A similar ambiguity in certain Biblical words usually rendered "double" has caused interpreters trouble, in part because they have not recognized the presence of the ambiguity or at least have not always reckoned sufficiently with the translation option of "equivalent" or "matching image" rather than "twofold." The most important issue that turns up in an examination of this matter is a theological question concerning God's justice. Through a mishandling of the troublesome "double" words the equity of divine justice has been beclouded...In 1 Tim 5:17 *diplous* describes

church. If you do worthwhile labor you should be compensated. Thus, ministers who labor in the full time preaching and teaching of the Word should receive equitable compensation. Paul cites Deut 25:4 because he sees a kernel of wisdom that even these work animals ought to be regarded as providing a valuable service and they should be compensated so they can live and keep up the good work. Paul commends this principle because it is morally wise, not because he saw this individual Old Testament law as still obligatory on the New Covenant institution of the church. We should take that principle as revealed wisdom from God that remains morally true today in the church, like Paul, and apply it to all who labor in such a way for the church.

Is there any other Biblical evidence for financially compensating those, other than ministers, who consistently devote their time and labor day to day, week to week, year to year, to the work of the ministry of the church? Yes, there is ample implicit Biblical evidence for compensating all those who labor in the full time work of church ministry and we will make the case by looking specifically at the ministry of women in the New Testament.<sup>4</sup>

Paul's letters and the Book of Acts mention twelve women by name who were coworkers with him in the gospel ministry. Four women are known as leaders of house churches: Lydia (Acts 16), Chloe (1 Cor 1:11), Apphia (Phil 2), and Nympha (Col 4:15).

Paul wrote that four women - Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis (Romans 16:6, 12) - had "worked very hard in the Lord." That Greek word translated "worked very hard" was used regularly by Paul to refer to those who carried out the regular work of the

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*the honor of which certain elders are to be considered worthy. The elders in view are those who rule well...If diplous is translated "double," efforts to interpret the verse become problematic and speculative. On the other hand if we translate diplous as "equivalent," the problems disappear. For it makes eminently good and simple sense to say that elders who perform their office well are deserving of matching (diplous) honor commensurate with their service. In Paul's corroborative observations in v.18 the pay earned by a laborer illustrates the honor due the elders in v.17, and this would point to a normal, commensurate (not extraordinary, double) measure of honor, honor matching the elders' labors.*

<sup>4</sup> Although I disagree with his conclusions, I am indebted to New Testament scholar, David M. Scholer, for the many Scripture references that follow. They are derived from his essay published in the issues of The Covenant Companion, December 1, 1983; December 15, 1983; January 1984; and February 1984.

<https://www.fuller.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Women-in-Ministry-A-Biblical-Basis-for-Equal-Partnership.pdf>

gospel ministry (1 Cor 4:12; 15:10; 16:15-16; Gal 4:11; Phi 2:16; Col 1:29; 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 4:10; 1 Tim 5:17; Acts 20:35). That term, "work very hard," for Paul, was not a casual reference to ministry.

In Rom 16:3–4 Paul greets Priscilla and Aquila and states that all the Gentile churches are indebted to both this husband and wife ministry team. In these verses Paul refers to both Aquila and his wife, Priscilla, as, "*fellow workers in Christ Jesus.*" This is also not a casual reference to ministry. Paul used this term regularly for other laborers in the gospel ministry: Urbanus (Rom 16:9), Timothy (Rom 16:21), Apollos and Paul himself (1 Cor 3:9), Titus (2 Cor 8:23), Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25), Clement (Phil 4:3), Philemon (Philem 1), Demas and Luke (Philem 24), and several others (Col 4:11). In Phil 4:2–3 Paul mentions two women, Euodia and Syntyche, whom he also classed "*along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers,*" and noted that these two women fellow workers "*labored side by side with me in the gospel,*" an expression similar to the "*worked very hard in the Lord*" phrase applied to the four women noted in Rom 16.

Paul also highly commends a woman named Phoebe to the Roman church (Rom 16:1–2). Paul refers to Phoebe as "*a servant of the church at Cenchreae.*" Although some have thought the reference "servant" here means "deacon" (or "deaconess"), the term is much more closely related to those who minister and teach the gospel. Paul regularly used this term "servant" to refer to persons clearly understood to be ministers of the gospel: Christ (Rom 15:8), Apollos (1 Cor 3:5), Epaphras (Col 1:7), Timothy (1 Tim 4:6), Tychicus (Eph 6:21; Col 4:7), himself (1 Cor 3:5; Eph 3:7; Col 1:23, 25), and generally (2 Cor 3:6; 6:4; 11:15, 23). However, in light of everything we've already said above, we must exclude the possibility that this refers to Phoebe as an ordained officer in the church (either elder or deacon). The most likely meaning of "servant" refers to her full-time labor in the work of gospel ministry. Thus, Paul exhorts the Roman church to "*help her in whatever she may need from you*" in order that she might continue in her labor.

These twelve women (Lydia, Chloe, Nympha, Apphia, Mary, Persis, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Priscilla, Euodia, Syntyche, and Phoebe) provide substantial evidence from Paul that women did participate in the regular gospel ministry, as did men.

This begs the question - can we really imagine women in the first century ancient near east giving their lives to serving the church in gospel ministry and the church not supporting them to do so? Staff titles and compensation packages are not the pertinent issues (they are a modern day consequence). The issue is whether Jesus has entrusted the church with the authority and the responsibility to care for and support those who give themselves to full time ministry (whether they be ordained or not). Given the explicit principle of 1 Tim 5:17-18 and the implicit Biblical evidence, it seems most appropriate and most wise to agree that these women shared in, benefited from, and were supported by the tithes and gifts to the church.

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