

WOMEN IN THE CHURCH: A BIBLICAL EXAMINATION  
OF THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN OFFICIAL MINISTRY

Laura Welker

Student Box # 2066

Martin Culy, Ph.D.

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## OUTLINE

Thesis: While the weight of evidence in the Bible supports “male headship”, this position should not exclude godly women from active ministry in any roles except those that are considered ultimately authoritative within a body of believers.

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  - B. Rom 16:1-15
  - C. 1 Cor 11
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The debate surrounding the issue of the biblical role of women in ministry has become one of the most volatile and tortuous issues the contemporary church has ever faced. Debate surrounding cultural differences in the first century and various interpretations of Greek words upon which relevant texts hinge has reached the point of absurdity, yet the conclusions drawn from such exegesis personally affects the order of the home, daily use of gifts, and even career decisions of over half of the Christian population. When relevant texts are examined, one is hard pressed to deny some sort of biblically instated hierarchical order, though the extent which men should lead women in the contemporary home, church and para-church situations is honestly debatable. In the end, while the weight of evidence in the Bible supports “male headship”, this position should not exclude godly women from active ministry in any role except those that are considered ultimately authoritative within a body of believers.

As the majority of Pauline teaching on the role of women is based on the creation account of Genesis 1-3, this text is vitally important to understanding the timeless roles given to men and women, as well as the root of the conflict between the sexes. Obviously, both the man and woman were created equal in God’s sight, and both were commissioned to rule over creation (Gen 1:27-29). It is also uncontested that man was made first, a point Paul often refers to, and that woman was made from him to complete him and be a “helper” to him (Gen 2:18 NIV).<sup>1</sup> The man named the woman, recognizing her equality while displaying his leadership.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, in

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<sup>1</sup> 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, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 183. Egalitarians point out that the word for “helper” is used 17 out of the 21 times in the Old Testament of God as our helper, which rightly counters any inferiority of the “helper”. In fact, the very nature of a “helper” implies that one has strengths and abilities to fill in where the other is lacking.

<sup>2</sup> Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., “Male-Female Equality and Male Headship: Genesis 1-3,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 102; Susan T. Foh, “A Male Leadership View: The Head of the Woman Is

the pre-Fall era, man and woman were ontologically equal, and while there was clearly no superior-inferior ranking system, the facts that man was created first, the woman was created to complete the man, and the man named the woman demonstrates some sort of primary leadership role for the man.<sup>3</sup>

The harmony between the sexes was destroyed by the sin of the man and woman. Interestingly, God queries the man first, not the woman.<sup>4</sup> It can be reasonably argued that the man failed to assert his authority and protect the woman from the serpent's wiles (as he was passively standing beside her), and that the woman usurped her authority by eating without consulting her husband first.<sup>5</sup> Debate centers over the meaning of the woman's curse: "Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you" (Gen 3:16). Some understand the desire to be a woman's desire to have a husband,<sup>6</sup> or the irrational attitude displayed by countless "needy" women who choose to remain with abusive men rather than face loneliness. Others, looking at the use of "desire" in Gen 4:7, see it as a desire for control, a domineering grasping for the husband's natural authority.<sup>7</sup> Finally, egalitarians view it as the curse of the unnatural

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the Man," in *Women in Ministry: Four Views*, eds. Bonnidell Clouse and Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 73.

<sup>3</sup> Ortlund, "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship," 101-102. "The man is to love his wife by accepting the primary responsibility for making their partnership a platform displaying God's glory, and the woman is to love her husband by supporting him in that godly undertaking."

<sup>4</sup> Foh, "A Male Leadership View," 74.

<sup>5</sup> John and Stasi Eldredge, *Captivating: Unveiling the Mystery of a Woman's Soul* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2005), 48. Unfortunately, the blame-shifting of the man upon the woman has continued throughout history in instigating horrific suppression and abuse of women: Loren Cunningham and David Joel Hamilton, *Why Not Women? A Fresh Look At Scripture on Women in Missions, Ministry and Leadership* (Seattle, WA: YWAM Publishing, 2000), 102-109.

<sup>6</sup> Robert D. Culver, "A Traditional View: Let Your Women Keep Silence," in *Women in Ministry: Four Views*, eds. Bonnidell Clouse and Robert G. Clouse (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 40.

<sup>7</sup> Foh, "A Male Leadership View," 75: "The battle of the sexes is the result of sin and the judgment on it for the woman. The woman's willing submission is replaced by a desire to control her husband. Consequently, to

dominance of men instead of the complete equality of the pre-Fall genders.<sup>8</sup> A combination of the first two views are most likely. In the sad event of the Fall, the leadership role of the man and the childbearing role of the woman were noted, but now the harmony is disrupted and the roles became contentious. However, while the leadership role of the man existed before the Fall, it is not irresponsible to diminish the extremes of abuse of women that have followed this curse of “desire” and “ruling over”, just as technology has diminished, but will never fully overcome, the rest of the curses.<sup>9</sup>

The majority of relevant passages concerning the role of women in ministry are found among the Pauline Epistles. The following will be dealt with in chronological order.

The final salutations in the book of Romans is the longest list of its kind in the NT, and over half of the people warmly commended are women.<sup>10</sup> Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, and Persis are praised as hard workers in the churches. Priscilla, along with Aquila, is a “fellow [worker]” of Paul, who risked her life for Paul and was the patroness of a church (Rom 16:3-5). Priscilla is repeatedly mentioned first in the NT (Acts 18:18, 19, 26; 2 Tim 4:19), and she is best known for instructing the brilliant teacher Apollos with her husband in their home (Acts 18:26). Questions have arisen over whether Junia was a female (Junia rather than Junianus) and whether the phrase “outstanding among the apostles” (Rom 16:7) meant that she was merely respected by the

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maintain his headship the husband must fight for it. Sin has ruined the marital dance, the easy, loving lead of the husband and the natural following of the wife”.

<sup>8</sup> Mickelsen, “An Egalitarian View,” 184.

<sup>9</sup> Culver, “A Traditional View,” 40-41: “The text, then, tells us to expect that in areas of life where authority is exercised over adults, men will ordinarily not be ruled by women, but rather, women will be ruled by men. With occasional exceptions, this is the way it has always been and likely always will be. The passage is not a command for men to rule women or for women to accept their rule, prudent as that may be; it is a statement of fact, which neither the Industrial Revolution nor the feminist movement is likely to overturn.”

<sup>10</sup> Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives: Marriage and Women’s Ministry in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), 240: “It appears that Paul is aware of the prejudice against women’s contributions in his society, and therefore works all the harder to make sure that the praiseworthy among them receive their due.”

apostles, or whether she is an apostle herself, and an outstanding one at that. Following exegetical evidence, most scholars, even hierarchicalists, conclude that she was indeed a female apostle.<sup>11</sup> Finally, Phoebe is mentioned as a deaconess, or minister, of her church, who has helped/protected/lead<sup>12</sup> many people, including Paul, and is the honored bearer of the epistle of Romans, Paul's doctrinal *magnum opus* (Rom 16:1-2). Bearers of doctrinal letters were expected to be knowledgeable enough to be a stand-in for the letter writer, answering questions as the author would.<sup>13</sup> One can conclude from the list in Romans 16 that while no women are specifically designated as authoritative leaders, women were recognized and honored in the early church for their strenuous work for the gospel, were patronesses, deacons and possibly even leaders in churches, were missionaries (the closest parallel to 1<sup>st</sup> century apostles not part of the Twelve), and were considered able to defend doctrinal letters.

The first Pauline passage to deal specifically with the role of women in the church is 1 Corinthians 11:3-16, which instructs on the proper head covering for men and women while praying and prophesying in public worship.<sup>14</sup> "The main point of this paragraph is the claim that

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<sup>11</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, "Neither Hierarchicalist Nor Egalitarian: Gender Roles in Paul," in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, eds. James R. Beck and Craig L. Blomberg (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001), 338; Thomas R. Schreiner, "The Valuable Ministries of Women in the Context of Male Leadership: A Survey of Old and New Testament Examples and Teaching," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 214; Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*," 242: "the most natural way to read the name is "Junia," a common enough woman's name. . . . the Greek is most naturally read as claiming that they were apostles. Paul nowhere limits the apostolic company to the Twelve plus himself"

<sup>12</sup> *prostatist*: "helped" (NIV); Blomberg, "Neither Hierarchicalist Nor Egalitarian," 337: "financially supported"; surprisingly, Schreiner, "The Valuable Ministries of Women in the Context of Male Leadership," 214: "legal protector or leader".

<sup>13</sup> Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*," 239: "At the very least, then, Phoebe held a position of considerable responsibility, prominence and authority in her congregation. She probably taught the Scriptures as well, but if she did not, she was at least trusted with sufficient regard theologically to be placed in this prominent authority role in the church, and to be recommended to those who might depend on her to help them understand Paul's letter to them."

<sup>14</sup> Craig. Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 208: The Corinthian women, apparently, were taking advantage of the freedom to publicly

what one does or doesn't put on one's physical head either honors or dishonors one's spiritual head,"<sup>15</sup> the spiritual head being Christ for men and men for women. "Head" can mean either the physical appendage, "source" or authority", and it appears Paul uses a word play here to highlight several of these meanings.<sup>16</sup> In the metaphorical sense, "authority" is the more likely understanding, with a loving authoritative order of God—Christ—Man—Woman.<sup>17</sup> "Man" and "woman" in this context can also be, and most likely should be, interpreted as "husband" and "wife". While the authoritative order is affirmed, Paul also affirms the interdependence of husbands and wives, as both come from God.<sup>18</sup> One can derive several universal principles from this tortuous and culturally overwhelming passage. Christians should dress appropriately and modestly according to their sex;<sup>19</sup> a hierarchical order of husbands over wives is affirmed and wives should not disgrace their husbands; wives are encouraged to wear a "sign of authority" (1 Cor 11:10); and women are free to participate in public prayer and prophesy.

The second Pauline passage is just a few chapters later in 1 Corinthians, and appears to be a contradiction to the permission given in chapter eleven for women to pray and prophesy in public worship. In the context of the proper order and evaluation of prophesy, Paul commands the silence and submission of women, saying, "it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church" (1 Cor 14:35). A few prominent scholars think verses 34-35 are a scribal gloss,

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pray and prophesy to the point where they were willfully violating social norms by refusing to cover their heads. Paul launches into an argument based on creation order and cultural convention that women should wear head coverings during public prayer and men should not.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. A covering of long hair on men signified homosexuality in Greek culture and short or loose hair on women signified adultery, and to dress as such was to dishonor Christ and the women's husbands (210).

<sup>16</sup> "Source" is attractive to egalitarians, but if Christ is the source of man as man is the source of woman, that would mean God is the source of Christ, which is not theologically feasible.

<sup>17</sup> Schreiner, "The Valuable Ministries of Women in the Context of Male Leadership," 127-128.

<sup>18</sup> Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 212.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 214.

originally written in the margin that became inserted into the text long after its composition. But the fact that all manuscripts contain these verses here or after verse 40 discourages this theory.<sup>20</sup> Others think Paul is actually quoting the Corinthian's letter back to them in 14:34-35, and is incensed that they would adhere to this silencing of women (14:36).<sup>21</sup> While Paul does quote Corinthian slogans several times (6:12; 7:1b; 8:1b), the length of this one and the fact that he offers no didactic rebuttal makes this unlikely.<sup>22</sup> Many reliable scholars lean toward a scenario where wives were participating in the evaluations of prophecies and were criticizing their husband's prophecies in public, causing dissension and not showing proper submission. Paul is then forbidding wives from this evaluation, possibly as the final evaluation would be the responsibility of the church elders, who were male.<sup>23</sup> An extension of this view is that the women were loudly asking uneducated and irrelevant questions and disrupting worship. The uneducated status of first century women, especially in the area of theology, is well documented, and this fits the "disgraceful" speech of women and the command for these women to "ask their own husbands at home" (14:35).<sup>24</sup> These two latter views are both very probable, with the only difference being the universal forbidding of female evaluation of prophecies or the temporal forbidding until the women were educated enough to participate. At any rate, universal principles from this passage are the necessity of orderly worship and the submission of wives to

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<sup>20</sup> D. A. Carson, "'Silent in the Churches': On the Role of Women in 1 Corinthians 14:33b-36," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 141-142.

<sup>21</sup> Loren Cunningham and David Joel Hamilton, *Why Not Women? A Fresh Look At Scripture on Women in Missions, Ministry and Leadership* (Seattle, WA: YWAM Publishing, 2000), 188-191.

<sup>22</sup> Carson, "'Silent in the Churches'," 147-148.

<sup>23</sup> Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 281-282; Carson, "'Silent in the Churches'," 151-153.

<sup>24</sup> Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, 80-88; page 87: Paul "is probably calling upon the law to support the wife's submission rather than her silence. As [in Eph 5], the Christian ideal does not remove the common ancient ideal of the wife's submissiveness; it merely adds the requirement that the husband join her in it. In this case, the wives are to submit themselves by following the propriety required of them to maintain church order."

their husbands, especially by refraining from public contradictions or criticisms, and possibly the forbidding of public female evaluations of prophecy.

The main passage that supports the egalitarian side is Galatians 3:28, where Paul declares, “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Egalitarians argue that this passage addresses more than soteriological equality: “It is not their distinctiveness, but their inequality of religious role, that is abolished ‘in Christ Jesus.’”<sup>25</sup> This passage is the basis by which all other passages are interpreted, and the restrictions of those passages are then only temporary, as this is the statement of universal equality.<sup>26</sup> Bruce questions why Gentiles and slaves are allowed leadership positions and women are excluded, particularly in light of passages commanding mutual submission (Eph 5:21).<sup>27</sup> The context in Galatians, however, is referring to freedom from the Law and justification by faith, which all races, genders and social classes share, and it is too brief of a passage to overturn the rest of the evidence in the New Testament for some sort of a authoritarian order.<sup>28</sup> But this does not deny the universal principle that women are equally valuable in Christ and deserve equal honor and respect, something that men throughout history have woefully failed to acknowledge.

The most difficult passage to address, and the one all hierarchicalists base their arguments on, is 1 Timothy 2:11-15. 1 Timothy was composed to instruct Timothy in countering rampant false teaching in his church which forbade marriage (4:3) and was primarily perpetuated by women, particularly widows, in the church (4:7; 5:13-15). Like 1 Corinthians 11 and 14, this

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<sup>25</sup> F. F. Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1982), 189-190; quoted in S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., “Role Distinctions in the Church: Galatians 3:28,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 159.

<sup>26</sup> Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, 205.

<sup>27</sup> Bruce, *The Epistle to the Galatians*, in Johnson, “Role Distinctions in the Church,” 159.

<sup>28</sup> S. Lewis Johnson, Jr., “Role Distinctions in the Church: Galatians 3:28,” 160.

passage is part of an extended exhortation for order and propriety in worship. Mickelsen sees this passage as addressing a Gnostic heresy which placed women above men, taught that Eve was created first and enlightened Adam with her wisdom, and discouraged marriage.<sup>29</sup> Hamilton believes that the silencing command was direct to one specific but unnamed woman. Paul then references Eve as a warning to that woman of the consequences of deception.<sup>30</sup> Keener notes that the word for “authority” is only used here in the Bible and is extremely rare in Greek literature, but its few occurrences mostly demonstrated a negative dominating, usurping grasping of authority or the proclamation of oneself as originator.<sup>31</sup> He then sees this passage as equivalent to 1 Corinthians, in which women are not to teach in a domineering fashion and they should not teach until they have been instructed adequately and demonstrated teachable, submissive demeanors.<sup>32</sup> These theories all have plausible elements; however, that Gnostic theory was probably not present in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, “a woman” is probably a gnomic statement about women in general, and it is odd why Paul would silence only women and not the men who began the false teaching.<sup>33</sup> On the other side, Moo takes the text at face value and believes this to be a universal command, in which women are not at any time allowed to teach or be in positions of

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<sup>29</sup> Mickelsen, “An Egalitarian View,” 199-202: This fits in with the false teaching context, and explains the reference to the creation order and the affirmation of childbearing as part of Christian living. Also, Ephesus was the location of the infamous and magnificent temple of Artemis, in which hundreds of female prostitutes played prominent roles. These included educated *hetaerae*, who as Christian converts would have assumed status and ability to teach authoritatively but were not grounded in Christian doctrine.

<sup>30</sup> Cunningham and Hamilton, *Why Not Women?*, 213-216. “Woman” in 2:11-15b is singular but in the surrounding verses it is plural.

<sup>31</sup> Keener, *Paul, Women and Wives*, 108-109.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 109, 112.

<sup>33</sup> Blomberg, “Neither Hierarchicalist Nor Egalitarian,” 358-359, 361.

authority over men within the Christian community.<sup>34</sup> No responsible scholar would advocate absolute silence in church, as “silence” means a quiet, teachable demeanor, and all acknowledge that Paul was counter-cultural by even allowing women to learn.<sup>35</sup> Blomberg, however, understands this passage to mean that only an *authoritative teaching position* in a mixed church setting is forbidden to women: the office of elder/overseer, and, in our time, the office of senior pastor.<sup>36</sup> This middle position is the one held by most careful scholars,<sup>37</sup> and though a decisive interpretation of this passage is nearly impossible, this position appears to strike a balance between the egalitarian and hierarchical positions. The universal principles in this passage for women would then be the importance of holy living over elaborate attire, the importance of the childrearing role, the necessity for quiet, teachable spirits, and the restriction of holding an authoritative role over men.

Two other passages, Ephesians 5:21-33 and 1 Peter 3:1-8, speak of the submission wives should have to their husbands *but* they also include commands for husbands to love, cherish and respect their wives. In all the uproar over the submission of women in recent history, very little has been written or taught on the other half of the gender equation: the role of men to sacrificially love their wives. If that side of marriage was addressed as much as women’s submission, the ire and angst of this issue today would be so greatly lessened that it would perhaps be nonexistent.

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<sup>34</sup> Douglas Moo, “What Does It Mean Not to Teach or Have Authority Over Men? 1 Timothy 2:11-15,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 186-187.

<sup>35</sup> Craig L. Blomberg, “Neither Hierarchicalist Nor Egalitarian,” 360.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 364.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 370.

While some consensus may be made in the above passages, how to apply them into our contemporary context is nearly impossible to determine. Our culture is the complete opposite of the Greco-Roman world, as cultural pressure is now for absolute gender equality rather than the total suppression of women. Rather than being completely ignorant of the scriptures,<sup>38</sup> women are now educated equally with men, and in fact excel in liberal art education above men.<sup>39</sup> In the Hellenistic and Jewish cultures women were segregated in nearly every aspect of life,<sup>40</sup> thus offering extensive opportunities for women to instruct just other women, whereas today segregation within the church, workplace and educational institutions is nonexistent, and restrictions on women to just teach other women would be severely greater now than in the first century. Our church structure contains offices and practices that did not exist in the first century, and we now have para-church institutions, such as Bible colleges, that further cloud the application of these principles. The following are my tentative applications to the above universal principles to various roles in the home, church and para-church institutions.

Following the overwhelming evidence throughout scripture, the husband should be the spiritual head and servant leader of the household, and to the extent that he leads in love and humility the wife should submit and support him. Marriage is to be a mutual partnership, and neither the submission of the wife *nor* the servant love of the husband should be under-emphasized. While such a marriage would nearly resemble an egalitarian marriage, in the case of disagreements the husband must lead rather than allowing a stalemate by equal votes.

Hyphenated last names should be banned, wedding bands should be worn, and the wife should

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<sup>38</sup> Cunningham and Hamilton, *Why Not Women?*, 106.

<sup>39</sup> Gregg Johnson, "The Biological Basis for Gender-Specific Behavior," in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 290.

<sup>40</sup> Wendy Cotter, "Women's Authority Roles in Paul's Churches: Countercultural or Conventional?" *Novum Testamentum XXXVI* (4 1994): 359, 367.

convey a respectful and godly demeanor. Ultimately, the wife should support her husband and follow him wherever his calling leads.

Next to God and her husband, a mother's primary responsibility is to her children, over and above her "calling" or career. The current state of society is grim evidence to the inability of women to be both full-time mothers and full-time workers outside the home, a task no human is equal to. If a woman has children, she should give up all full-time work for at least the first 5 years of her children, and then should only work part-time until her children are grown. While there may be a prolonged sense of unfulfillment for the woman, her task of bringing up godly children is of the utmost importance.

Single women, as they have none of these responsibilities, should be considered free to pursue any career except for ultimately authoritative roles. But they must fully acknowledge that the advent of marriage and children will and should disrupt whatever plans they may have for their lives. They must either be willing to adapt or never marry. Unfortunately, very few scholars address the significance of these texts for single women, and even though Piper addresses an entire preface in his book to single women, he fails to make realistic connections.

While a number of denominations allow female senior pastors, it is to allow this biblically. Directional and disciplinarian authority is given to men, and though husband-wife pastor teams function admirably, it should be understood that the man is the head pastor and ultimate authority. To be sure, there have been exceptions in biblical and church history of women assuming leading roles,<sup>41</sup> and while it cannot be denied that God can use women senior pastors, this is still very much the exception to the better norm. Indeed, it is a beautiful thing to see passionate, godly men leading as God intended.

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<sup>41</sup> Cunningham and Hamilton, *Why Not Women?*, 52-53, 55-56.

The position of elder varies greatly from church to church. In the typical function where they are above deacons, below senior pastors, and are in charge of making significant decisions, enforcing church discipline and direction, and shepherding the “flock”, elders should be only men. Unfortunately, many churches are so small or the men are so spiritually immature that sometimes only women are left to fill this role. As God does bless the necessary exception women elders should not be condemned, but they should not be in this position if there are qualified men in the congregation.

Again, the authority and responsibilities of deacons varies from church to church, but in the biblical definition of servants, administrators and ministers, women are definitely allowed and by nature function brilliantly. Such roles would include organizing events and prayer chains, overseeing visitations, counseling and discipleship of women, teaching Sunday School and Bible studies, assisting in “set-up” and “take-down” of sanctuaries, and other general ministries.

Similar to the deacon’s role are the associate pastorships. These differ from the elder’s role because of their specialized ministries, and while some by their nature should be primarily filled by men, others should be primarily filled by women. The former include senior high youth pastors (because of the particular need for male role models by adolescent males today) and the latter include children’s ministry and women’s ministry pastors, counseling pastors (there should be both a man and a woman in this position), and worship pastors, though men would be preferred for the latter in large, mixed worship teams.

Throughout the past several centuries, women have shone brilliantly as missionaries in spite of the rigors and dangers of this role. Only recently has the contradiction been addressed why women were allowed to plant churches, baptize, instruct national men, and basically function in every role that has been denied them here. No doubt men have refused their

missionary calling and, as Paul said, “the important thing is that in every way . . . Christ is preached” (Phil 1:18). There is no question God has blessed these women’s sacrificial work for the Kingdom, and many have turned over their ministries to the national men when they were adequately trained.<sup>42</sup> Practically, it is best for women to evangelize with their husbands or in missionary communities because of cultural and safety limitations.

Finally, the para-church setting poses unique problems, as they are outside of the established church system. Unfortunately, no scholar has adequately addressed this aspect, as all focus their attention only on the three church offices of pastor, elder and deacon. At many Bible colleges and universities women are allowed to teach all secular subjects and even ministry courses, yet are not hired to teach Bible or theology courses. Such institutions should rightly strongly encourage spiritual integration into courses of all subjects, but women are allowed to doctrine and theology here that would otherwise be forbidden in “official” BT courses, forming a contradiction. John Piper even includes a list of occupations available to women, including teaching in colleges, but offers no distinction between theological and secular courses.<sup>43</sup> Beck and Blomberg argue that “scholarship is not in any way organically linked to any of the New Testament offices or roles [that] are closed to women” and lament the very low number of women scholars on the hierarchical side.<sup>44</sup> No doubt this is because many hierarchicalists see no distinction between a college professor and the pastor of a church. And there is no point for a woman, especially a single one, to labor toward a Ph.D. with no option for paying job to support herself. However, unlike pastors or elders, professors do not have disciplinarian or directional

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<sup>42</sup> Schreiner, “Women in Ministry,” 200.

<sup>43</sup> John Piper, “A Vision of Biblical Complementarity: Manhood and Womanhood Defined According to the Bible,” in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, eds. John Piper and Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1991), 58.

<sup>44</sup> James R. Beck and Craig L. Blomberg, “Conclusion,” in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, eds. James R. Beck and Craig L. Blomberg (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 2001), 325.

authority, as the school administration is responsible for those areas. Women should not be college presidents, academic deans, or class presidents as these are authoritative and directional roles. But as long as their doctrine is sound and their demeanor respectful (as apposed to rabid feminists with “axes to grind”), the case can be made for women as Bible professors. Unlike pastors, they are not the sole teacher of a group, but are part of a team of professors who provide theological balance. The classes they teach can be optional, in which males sit voluntarily under their teaching. The canon is now closed, unlike in New Testament times in which holding to oral tradition was so vitally important; women are now equally educated, unlike the ignorant women in biblical times; social pressure is now for gender assimilation, not segregation. But women who become professors must still place their families above their work, as in any profession.

Both the egalitarians and hierarchicalists have valid arguments, and it cannot be denied that God blesses the ministries of many women in leadership and ministerial roles. Biblical evidence supports male headship, and male leadership should be the norm, but this should never be used to condemn the exception. Women should serve with respect and confidence in any ministry except for those of ultimate authority. When men lead in sacrificial love, as they are made to, and women complement and support them, as they are made to, God’s original purpose for the sexes is made evident to all.

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