

Appendix C:
The Role Of Women In Ministry
(Rev. 05/25)

Foreword

For years, I've taught a class called "No Dumb Questions" (NDQ). In NDQ, I allow students – and adults – to ask any question they want to know the answer to. In my opinion, the only "dumb" question that you can have about God/Jesus/Bible/Church is the one that you **wanted** to ask...and didn't.

Along the way, I've come to use a very specific process for answering these questions:

First, if the answer is simple, clear, and can easily be demonstrated from the Bible, I have them turn in their Bibles, read the verses, and ask them to draw their own conclusions. After they've thought about it, we discuss it as a group to make sure that everyone is on the same page.

Second, if the answer is more complex, I'll ask for more time (if needed) and write a paper that explains my views. Then, together, we'll go through my notes, look up the Bible verses, and see what people think. The students then will get a copy of the paper to take with, so they can continue their research after our time has ended.

Along the way, I've developed a commitment to avoiding what I like to call "knee-jerk reactions". When I was younger, if I was asked a question I would share with people from my "oh-so-vast realm of experience". I never stopped to ask if what I was teaching was true; instead I told them what I **thought** was true, and never bothered to look it up in the Bible to verify my answers.

As I've become older, I prefer to challenge my beliefs...and let others challenge them. In the past, I would have been offended to have someone question me; now, I welcome the opportunity. Why? Because if my theology is soundly grounded in God's Word, then a challenge is nothing to be afraid of.

However, if my theology is grounded on "tradition", "because someone told me so", or "because I saw it on YouTube", then it **should** be challenged. If I can't back up it up in the Bible, then it's not something that I should be sharing.

Why does any of this matter? Because the topic for the paper I'm writing today came as a challenge; one where I had to dig deep into the Bible to find an answer. I don't come to my conclusions lightly. In fact, I had to jettison 30+ years of "knowing" before I found "certainty" grounded in the Bible.

Am I wrong? Possibly. I've been wrong before, so why not now? But if I'm right, then this is going to have a profound impact on how our church functions.

And with that as the lead-in to this paper, let's get to the question at hand...

Introduction

A few years back, I was asked a "No Dumb Question" by a young lady who wanted to know, *"Is it wrong for women to be preachers? If we choose this for ourselves, is it dangerous religiously?"* To make sure I knew that she put it in the box – I usually do this anonymously – she came up and told me that she was the one asking.

Now her father was the Pastor of a conservative church, and I had grown up with a fairly conservative theology. But this young lady genuinely wanted an answer, and it was my job to provide one for her.

So, I sat down, pulled out a ton of books, and started to look up the role of women in ministry. When I read the Bible in English, it was pretty much cut-and-dried; no room for questioning. When I read my favorite commentaries, they matched what I believed. And then, to make sure I had done my work diligently, I pulled out my Greek and Hebrew resources.

And that's where it all fell apart...

To be honest, at that time, I wasn't really willing to change my views on something that I had "known" for over three decades. Furthermore, working with a conservative, Christian group and knowing her father, I wanted to be sure that I presented the information in a sensitive way. And so I sort-of, kind-of answered it and hoped that she would be happy with what I presented. (I wasn't happy with what I presented, but that seemed secondary to the task at hand.)

Sure enough, the next week I received a follow-up question from her: *"Is it wrong for women to pray in church and/or be pastors because of 1 Corinthians 14:34?"* This time, I couldn't hide. So, with a sigh I pulled out all of the books from last time – and a dozen more besides – and began to craft what would become the core of this document.

Along the way, I studied a lot about the two main views on the roles of women in leadership:

- The first view is called "Complementarianism" – or what I will refer to as the "Traditional View". In complementarianism, the view is that God has restricted women from serving in specific roles. Instead, women are called to serve in other roles which are still important, but are meant to compliment the role of men. Specific roles denied women include the right to teach men (1 Timothy 2:12), have authority over men (1 Timothy 2:12), or to serve in the role of Elders (1 Timothy 3:1-13).
- The second view is called "Egalitarianism". In egalitarianism, the view is that there are no gender-based restrictions for any role within the church. In cases where verses specifically prohibit women serving in a role, the argument is made that it was a culture circumstance, a temporary prohibition, etc. Unfortunately, in my research, much of the rejection of the applicable Bible verses was done without any Biblical support; it was more of an opinion.

So, which view is Biblically-correct? Actually, that seems to be the issue. Most proponents of Complementarianism tend to come from conservative schools of thought, while those from Egalitarianism tend to come from a more liberal outlook.

In fact, in a lot of the books that I've read, the goal of the authors seems more focused on *eisgesis* – reading into the text, as opposed to *exegesis* – seeing what the text actually says. In other words, the starting point of the author seems to dictate their conclusions. (Strange, right?)

If I'm convinced women CANNOT serve as Pastors, then I will reject – or modify – the Bible verses that speak against my view. By the same token, if I'm convinced that women CAN be Pastors, then no amount of verses to the contrary will sway my opinion. In BOTH cases I approach the text with my

preconceived ideas and then I only look for material that supports my viewpoint.

For this paper, rather than begin with a commitment to either Complementarianism or Egalitarianism, why don't we begin with a commitment to the Bible? Let's see what God's Word says, let's read all of the relevant passages, and then discover where it leads.

And so, that's what I propose to do...

Now am I unbiased? Certainly not! Could I make a mistake based on my own views? Certainly. But my goal in this paper is to present my research, show you my conclusions, and then ask you to decide for yourself. If I'm wrong, show me how I'm wrong. If I'm right, you still need to decide what to do with this information. (How's that for an introduction?)

The Traditional View #1 (1 Timothy 2:11-12)

To start this discussion, let's take a look at what I'm going to call the "traditional" view: Complementarianism. And to begin with, let's go to the verses that are quoted the most in this debate:

Women should learn quietly and submissively. I do not let women teach men or have authority over them. Let them listen quietly. - 1 Timothy 2:11-12 (NLT)

On the surface, these two verses seem like an end to the discussion. Paul, the writer of the Epistles, including this one to Timothy, says that women cannot "teach men or have authority over them". All other arguments are invalid, the discussion is done, and we don't need to go on.

Or do we?

You see, the text I quoted above – from the New Living Translation – is the ENGLISH translation of a Greek passage. The problem is that when you translate ANYTHING from one language to another, there is the possibility of something getting lost. (Ever heard the phrase, "Lost in translation"?)

To do our due diligence, we need to get away from the English and seek out the Greek, instead. Below is a transliteration – a word-for-word translation – of the Greek:

A woman in quietness let learn in all submissiveness. To teach however a woman not I do permit nor to use authority over a man but to be in quietness. - 1 Timothy 2:11-12 (GRK)

Okay, is there any difference here? It seems to say the same thing, right?

But here's where it gets interesting! I'm an English-geek AND a Greek-geek, so I find ALL of this interesting! (Don't judge me!) In this text there are three verbs that we need to pay attention to:

1. In verse 11, the word "let learn" (Greek: μανθανέτω or manthaneto) is a present, imperative, active, third person, singular verb. This is what we would consider a "current command". It doesn't talk about the past, nor the future; literally its focus is on what we see right now. To put

this into context, Paul is saying, “At this time, I command women to learn quietly and submissively!” It says nothing about the future.

2. In verse 12, the word “I do permit” (Greek: ἐπιτρέπω or epitrepo) is a present, indicative, active, first person, singular verb. In this case, Paul isn’t even commanding the church to prevent women from teaching. Instead, the Greek means that this is the action that is happening at the present time, that the subject (Paul) is making sure the action is carried out, and that it’s a true statement. To put this into context, Paul is saying, “At this time, I don’t let women teach.” Again, it says nothing about the future.¹
3. In verse 12, the word “to be” (Greek: εἶναι or einai) is a present, infinitive, active verb. An infinitive is used to describe an action without actually doing the action. For example, “Drive to church.” It’s not saying that I am – at that time – driving to church; instead, it’s describing an action to be taken. To put this into context, Paul is saying, “Women are to be quiet.” Again, with the present, active tenses attached, this says only that Paul wants them to be quiet NOW; it has no future implications.

To put this into perspective, let’s look at the phrase, “I’m teaching Chapel right now.” Suppose I texted that to you. You would understand that to mean that, at the time of the text, I am CURRENTLY, up front and speaking. It says NOTHING about what I will be doing later. You wouldn’t call me up in 30 years and say, “Oh! I’m sorry to interrupt you! You’re teaching Chapel right now, aren’t you!” The message I sent you in the past has no bearing on the present.

Literally, to rewrite these verses into correct, modern English grammar, you would have:

“At this time, a woman needs to learn in all submissiveness. Also, at this time, don’t let a woman teach or rule over a man, but have them continue to learn in silence.”

This isn’t a command, nor is it a prohibition for all time. Instead, what Paul is saying here is that the women in the church, at this particular place and time, need to learn before they speak. That these women shouldn’t be in charge right now. The Greek says nothing about what will happen in the future.

Again, if Paul wanted to make it “permanent”, he could just as easily have used imperative in all three cases and made them a command. (Paul DOES use an imperative in verse 11, but within the context, it’s meant as a command for the woman at that time, not for any and all women in the future.)

Based on all of this, Paul is telling Timothy that the women in his church need to learn in silence...for now; and at this time, those specific women are not permitted to teach. To read anything more into this statement goes beyond what the Greek – and English – grammar permits.

Furthermore, let’s take a look at verses 13-15:

1 For further reading on this tense: *The first kind of verb we will discuss is the one which occurs most often in the New Testament: Present, Active, Indicative. That is, the tense is present (describing action taking place now), the voice is active (meaning that the verb's subject is acting and not being acted upon), and the mood is indicative (which demonstrates true reality). Present, Active, Indicative verbs are translated by a present tense English verb. - Theology.edu (2017)*

For God made Adam first, and afterward he made Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived by Satan. The woman was deceived, and sin was the result. But women will be saved through childbearing, assuming they continue to live in faith, love, holiness, and modesty. - 1 Timothy 2:13-15 (NLT)

Here it seems that Paul is making a statement about the subservient nature of women. The problem is that Paul makes similar statements in 1 Corinthians 11:8-9, but in neither of these cases is it clear what Paul is saying. Why talk about the current situation and then go back to Creation?

Also, verse 15 says that women will be “saved” in childbearing, but that violates his salvation message...pretty much everywhere else! In this case, rather than being dogmatic, perhaps the best option is to admit that we don’t understand what Paul is really saying here.

With that, it would seem that the prohibition against women teaching was meant to be only for a set period of time, with no restrictions placed on the future roles of women; or, indeed on the role of women in other churches at that time!

The Traditional View #2 (1 Corinthians 14:34-35)

The second set of verses that we need to consider are in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35:

Women should be silent during the church meetings. It is not proper for them to speak. They should be submissive, just as the law says. If they have any questions, they should ask their husbands at home, for it is improper for women to speak in church meetings. - 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 (NLT)

I want to encourage you to go look up this passage. If you do, you should see a footnote. What does it say in your Bible? In mine, it says, “Some manuscripts place verses 34-35 after 14:40.” Because of this, we have three choices:

1. Paul wrote it and it belongs at verses 34-35 where your Bible placed it.
If it’s in the right spot, Paul is contradicting what he said in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 AND there’s a flaw in the Greek argument that Paul is developing in verses 32-33. Also, in the Greek it’s kind of jarring to throw in verses 34-35; and, if they’re in the correct place, these verses, stylistically, are unique in all of Paul’s writings. Finally, these verses don’t match ANY of Paul’s writings in the rest of the chapter, let alone the book!
2. Paul wrote it and it belongs at the end of the chapter.
If it’s in the wrong spot, then it belongs with Paul’s rhetorical questions in verses 36-40. Paul is being sarcastic here. “Did the Gospel come from you? Are you really prophets? If so, let the women sit down and learn in silence!” In this case, it’s NOT meant to be taken literally, which means that it’s in agreement with Paul’s previous arguments. (It’s still very awkward in the Greek, but MUCH less awkward than Option #1.)
3. It was added later.
According to Gordon Fee, an expert in New Testament studies, it’s entirely possible that this

was added later. This happened with the ending to the Book of Mark, where the most reliable manuscripts did NOT include that ending. (We also find glosses and additions in John 5:4, Acts 8:37, 1 John 5:7-8, etc.) Fee makes a quite lengthy argument against these two verses in The New International Commentary On The New Testament: The First Epistle To The Corinthians © 1991. If we remove those two verses, the Greek makes sense, Paul's arguments don't contradict themselves, and the problems of trying to sort out what to do with those verses goes away. (Please check out *Appendix D: Excerpt From The First Epistle To The Corinthians* by Fee for more information on this topic.)

If Gordon Fee is correct, then this is what's called a "gloss". A gloss is a marginal notation – either written by Paul or by a scribe – which was then later added to the text. (That would account for it appearing in two separate places in 1 Corinthians.)

Now it's fair to note that many – if not most – scholars argue for the verses belonging where they are placed in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. (Fee, and others who agree with him, are in the minority in this case.) However, since the verses DO appear after 14:40 in certain texts, and because it DOES contradict what Paul, himself, says earlier, I think the case needs to be made that these verses are questionable. Are they meant to be literal or sarcastic?

Most churches don't routinely handle venomous snakes because they don't build their theology on the longer ending of Mark. Similarly, because these verses are "suspect", we shouldn't take them as "authoritative" and we should think carefully before we build our theology on them.

The Traditional View #3 (1 Timothy 3:1-7)

Now it might seem strange that I covered 1 Timothy 2, then went to 1 Corinthians 14, then came back to 1 Timothy 3, but I want to keep "like with like". In both 1 Timothy and 1 Corinthians, it deals with women being told to learn in silence. Now, we're going to take a look at "Women As Elders".

The first thing to notice is 1 Timothy 3:1:

This is a trustworthy saying: "If someone aspires to be a church leader, he desires an honorable position." - 1 Timothy 3:1 (NLT)

As always, let's look at the Greek. According to Biblehub.com, the Greek says:

Trustworthy [is] the saying: If anyone overseership aspires to, of good a work he is desired. (Greek transliteration.)

In this case, both the English and the Greek coincide: it clearly says "he" which means male which means "not female" which means end of discussion, right?

Except it doesn't...

If you go back to the original Greek words, the pronoun "he" does not exist. When these translators – most translators, in fact – convert these words from Greek to English, they **ADD** the pronoun "he". In

fact, there is **NO** pronoun associated with the verb. Furthermore, the word “anyone” is “τις” (tis) in Greek, which literally means “anyone”. There is no “male” language in this verse.² (As one of the Greek sources I looked at put it, “The masculine ‘he’ is included for clarity.” But clarity for whom?)

In other words, a better way to render this verse is might be:

This is a trustworthy saying: “If someone aspires to be a church leader, they desire an honorable position.” - 1 Timothy 3:1

While I usually hate the “they” pronoun, in this case I feel it’s appropriate. Notice that, like in the original Greek, there is no male/female distinction. In fact, 1 Timothy 3:1 seems to indicate that women CAN be an “Elder”.

More specifically, if this was a role restricted to men only, Paul could have used a word like “ἄνθρωπος” (aner), which would mean “a male human being”. Instead, there is no restriction in the Greek, which would seem to indicate that **there is no restriction**.

After that, Paul lists the requirements for an Elder:

So a church leader must be a man whose life is above reproach. He must be faithful to his wife. He must exercise self-control, live wisely, and have a good reputation. He must enjoy having guests in his home, and he must be able to teach. He must not be a heavy drinker or be violent. He must be gentle, not quarrelsome, and not love money. He must manage his own family well, having children who respect and obey him. For if a man cannot manage his own household, how can he take care of God’s church?

A church leader must not be a new believer, because he might become proud, and the devil would cause him to fall. Also, people outside the church must speak well of him so that he will not be disgraced and fall into the devil’s trap. - 1 Timothy 3:2-7 (NLT)

Again, let’s look at the Greek:

*It behooves therefore the overseer above reproach to be, of one wife [the] husband, sober, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to wine, not a striker, but gentle, peaceable, not loving money, the own house well managing, children having in submission, with all dignity – if but one the own household to manage not knows, how [the] church of God [how] will **he** care for?*

*Not a novice, that not having been puffed up into [the] judgment **he** might fall of the devil. It behooves [**him**] now also a testimony good to have from those outside so that not into reproach **he** might fall, and [the] snare of the devil. - 1 Timothy 3:2-7 (GRK)*

First of all, do you see all of the “he/him” words? (I’ve bolded them for you.) Want to know a secret? They’re actually NOT in the Greek! The verbs translated as “he / him” in 3:5, 3:6, and 3:7 are third person singular, not first person masculine. But even that’s beside the point.

² Πιστὸς ὁ λόγος εἴ τις ἐπισκοπῆς ὀρέγεται καλοῦ ἔργου ἐπιθυμεῖ is the original Greek text. “Epithymeí” is the verb in question. It’s a Verb: Present, Indicative, Active, Third-Person, Singular.

The point is the masculine pronouns (e.g. “he”) are added to our English translations, but they are not in the original text! In fact, even in the Greek transliteration of the words listed above, the male pronouns are added “to aid in understanding the text”. But, who are we “aiding” and in what way does adding words to the text help us?³

Again, to make it clear, Paul could have easily used masculine pronouns...and yet he doesn’t. Because of that, we need to be VERY careful about adding words, especially if they’re being used to support a particular viewpoint.

Now, let’s deal with the other “male” aspect of this description. Take a look at the underlined section in the Greek text: “*of one wife [the] husband*”. Pretty much everyone agrees that this refers to a man; but does this phrase define the rest of the passage? Not really.

The prohibition of a “one wife husband” would make sense since polygamy in the culture was allowed for the males only; women were not allowed to have multiple husbands. As such, it wouldn’t make sense to say “one husband wife” because that wasn’t a possibility in that culture.

Other than 1 Timothy 3:2, there is NO mention of the gender of an overseer in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. It can be inferred, but it isn’t plainly stated. Furthermore, Paul doesn’t use ANY male pronouns in reference to the description in verses 1-7! You would think that if it was restricted, he would; that way we could avoid confusion.

So, does this passage mean women can’t be Elders? Nope.

The Traditional View #4 (Titus 1:6-9)

So, we’ve covered the role of women as Elders in 1 Timothy, but there IS another list of the requirements for Elders! This list is also written by Paul, and is to be found in Titus 1:6-9:

An elder must live a blameless life. He must be faithful to his wife, and his children must be believers who don’t have a reputation for being wild or rebellious. A church leader is a manager of God’s household, so he must live a blameless life. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered; he must not be a heavy drinker, violent, or dishonest with money.

Rather, he must enjoy having guests in his home, and he must love what is good. He must live wisely and be just. He must live a devout and disciplined life. He must have a strong belief in the trustworthy message he was taught; then he will be able to encourage others with wholesome teaching and show those who oppose it where they

3 To be completely fair, the descriptions, in Greek, do use masculine endings, but Greek masculine endings can also include women. If the group was all women, they would use a feminine ending. If the group was all male, they would use a masculine ending. However, if the group being addressed was mixed, they would STILL use a masculine ending, even if it was only one man and a thousand women! Because of this, you would expect to find masculine endings for a role that could easily be filled by both men and women.

Furthermore, since the rest of the text doesn’t include “male-only” references, it’s hard to infer it, especially since Paul could have easily ended the debate by using just one male pronoun.

are wrong. - Titus 1:6-9 (NLT)

And in the Greek:

If anyone is blameless, of one wife [the] husband, children having believing, not under accusation of debauchery, or insubordinate. It behooves for the overseer blameless to be, as God's steward; not self-willed, not quick tempered, not given to wine, not a striker, not greedy of base gain...

*... But hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, [and disciplined]; holding to the according to the teaching faithful word, that able **he** may be both to encourage with teaching sound, and those contradicting [it] to convict. - Titus 1:6-9 (GRK)*

As with 1 Timothy, care to guess what pronoun isn't in the original text? The "he" we find in verse nine. It's simply not there.

Again, as with 1 Timothy, only the "*one wife [the] husband*" clause indicates that this could describe male-only Elders; the rest of this text is devoid of any male/female pronouns. Again, if Paul meant to make this easy on us, why doesn't he use a male-only pronoun just once?

As we talked about before, the prohibition of a "one wife husband" would make sense only for men. Because of that, as with 1 Timothy 3, there is NO mention of the gender of an overseer.

So, does this passage mean women can't be Elders? Nope.

Making Exceptions For Male Elders ONLY

If you read the Biblical description for an Elder, there are clear rules set forth. (You can read more in *Appendix A: Definition And Uses Of "Elder"*.) However, not all churches abide by them. Let me give you some examples:

According to Paul:

1. All Elders must be married. This means:
 - a. No single person may ever serve as an Elder.
 - b. If the wife of an Elder dies, that Elder must immediately be removed from their role. (They are no longer "married".)
 - c. If anyone has ever been divorced at any point in their life, they are disqualified from service, even if the divorce took place prior to them becoming a Christian. (There is no allowance for remarriage specified here.)
2. All Elders must be able to teach. 1 Timothy makes no allowances for non-teaching Elders. This means:

- a. An Elder's teaching must be both educational and effective. "Educational" means that believers are left with a deeper understand of the Bible and how it relates to their lives. "Effective" means that it is presented in a manner that everyone can both understand and employ.
 - b. Any Elder whose teaching is not both effective and educational needs to be removed. (Would you measure this by voting after each service?)
3. All Elders must have more than one child. The Greek word "τέκνα" (tekna) is plural: "children", not "child". This means:
- a. No person with only one child may serve as an Elder.
 - b. Assuming a family only has two children, if the second child dies – regardless of the circumstances – that Elder must immediately be removed from his role. (He no longer has "children".)
4. All elders must have children who behave. This means that if a child rebels, the Elder must be immediately removed. Since there is no limitation placed in either Timothy or Titus, this could include adult children who live "carnal" lives.

If we read the English as literal and enforce the rules to prevent women from serving in the role of Elder, they should also be enforced literally for all men serving in the role. However, I know of a number of churches that make "exceptions" for men...but not women. Is this appropriate?

One Last Question About Elders

Paul, the man who establishes the role of the Elder, says something that makes no sense in light of 1 Timothy 3. In 1 Corinthians 7:7, Paul writes:

But I wish everyone were single, just as I am. Yet each person has a special gift from God, of one kind or another. - 1 Corinthians 7:7 (NLT)

But, if that were to happen, there wouldn't be ANY married people – nor would there be couples with the requisite 2+ children – which means that there would no longer be men to fulfill the role of an Elder.

Does this mean that Paul wishes for the church to collapse due to lack of leadership so soon after it gets going? How are we to reconcile this verse in light of 1 Timothy 3?

Summation Of The Traditional View

When asked about women in ministry, these four passages are the most frequently cited. However, when we get into the text, we see that the Greek verb tenses don't match our conclusions, that the male pronouns that are inserted "for clarity" aren't in the original text, and that the most hard-line verses against women in leadership roles may simply be a marginal notation that is open to discussion.

When I started my journey in answering this NDQ for the young lady who asked, I came from the Traditional View. I “knew” from my church, “knew” from my education, “knew” from my books, that the Traditional View was rock-solid, iron-clad, and indisputable.

And then I did the research...

In the case of 1 Timothy 2:11-12, I wasn't actually too bothered. Why? Because what my Bible says in English is a fair approximation of it. The problem is that in English you can't read the verb tense that is used in the Greek. This literally is a case of something being “lost in translation”.

When I read 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, I was rather angry when I realized that the male pronouns that I was reading in English weren't in the Greek. As one text put it, “The male pronouns can be inferred...” Or, better yet, why don't we NOT “infer” them and let the text speak for itself?

When I read 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, especially in the commentary by Fee, I was even more frustrated. I had been taught that those verses were unassailable...except they aren't. In fact, the Study Notes in one of my Bibles specifically talks about the need for women to remain silent in church.

Why not teach that there IS a discrepancy? Is it because the view challenges our Traditional beliefs? If so, then maybe the problem is in our Traditional beliefs...

At this point, the “truths” I had been clinging to were shaken. So, rather than trying to support the Traditional view, I decided to go on a study of the Bible to see what roles God allowed women to fill. And that's the next part of this document.

Leader Of Men: Deborah (Judges 4)

In the Book of Judges, we read this:

Deborah, the wife of Lappidoth, was a prophet who was judging Israel at that time. She would sit under the Palm of Deborah, between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites would go to her for judgment. One day she sent for Barak son of Abinoam, who lived in Kedesh in the land of Naphtali. She said to him, “This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, commands you: Call out 10,000 warriors from the tribes of Naphtali and Zebulun at Mount Tabor. And I will call out Sisera, commander of Jabin's army, along with his chariots and warriors, to the Kishon River. There I will give you victory over him.”

Barak told her, “I will go, but only if you go with me.”

“Very well,” she replied, “I will go with you. But you will receive no honor in this venture, for the LORD's victory over Sisera will be at the hands of a woman.” So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh. - Judges 4:4-9 (NLT)

From this section, we see some key points:

1. Deborah is a prophetess. She speaks messages from God.
2. Deborah is a Judge. The Hebrew word here is “שֹׁפֶטָה” (sopetah) which literally means both to judge and govern. In the Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon, it describes this role as:

Act as law-giver, judge, governor (giving law, deciding controversies and executing law, civil, religious, political, social; both early and late). (Source: Brown-Driver-Briggs Lexicon, 2006)
3. Deborah is well-known. People from Israel show up to have her act as judge on their behalf.
4. Deborah is a leader of men. In Judges 4:6-8, Deborah gives instructions to Barak. Not only does Barak agree to go, but he insists that Deborah go with him, despite the fact that women weren’t supposed to go to war! Later, in verse 14, Deborah tells Barak to march forth and Barak goes...and God gives Israel the victory!

Notice that at no time do any of the men have a problem with Deborah serving in any of these roles. When she proclaims a message from God, they listen. When she rules over them and decides conflicts, they agree with her decisions. When Barak is told by Deborah to go, he goes...and takes Deborah, the prophetess and Judge, with him just to be sure!

Does the Bible condemn Deborah for usurping the role of a man? No. Is she upheld to scorn for failing to sit down and be silent when men wanted to hear from God? No. Is she “lording it over men” because she commands men? No.

If God doesn’t have a problem with Deborah leading in the Old Testament, then why is it such a problem when it comes to the New Testament? Did God change who He was? Did the rules switch? Or, can we see the role of women in ministry as a continuous thread throughout the entire Bible?

Teacher Of Men: Priscilla (Acts 18)

In the New Testament, we find a different story. If you would, please turn to Acts 18:1-3:

Then Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he became acquainted with a Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently arrived from Italy with his wife, Priscilla. They had left Italy when Claudius Caesar deported all Jews from Rome. Paul lived and worked with them, for they were tentmakers just as he was. - Acts 18:1-3 (NLT)

So, what are we told about Priscilla? Not much except the fact that she and her husband, Aquila, are both Jews and they were driven out of Italy when Claudius Caesar kicked the Jews out of Rome. Oh, and along with that, they are “of the same trade” (tentmaker) as Paul.

Then, skipping ahead, we find this:

Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the

Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately. - Acts 18:24-26 (NLT)

Notice that Aquila AND Priscilla sat down with Apollos and “*explained to him the way of God more accurately*”. They shared the task! It’s not that Aquila explained and Priscilla just sat there in silence, like others would argue that women should do.

From this section, we see some key points:

1. Priscilla is the leader in the discussions with Apollos. In Greek, you usually list the people in order of importance.⁴ In this case, Priscilla – the woman – is mentioned before Aquila – the man.⁵

To help you to better understand this, let me share with you a quote from BereanInsights.org:

I believe Luke is doing that here to highlight Priscilla and her position and value in contrast to Aquila. To consistently place Priscilla’s name first in the pairing is to draw attention to her. Luke wrote as one skilled in Greek language and educated as a physician. The way to emphasize something in Greek is to place it first in a list or to place it first or last in the sentence in order to give it prominence. Luke clearly knew that and to do that here with Priscilla’s name is to draw attention to her. I agree with the many modern-day teachers, preachers and commentators who conclude that Priscilla was likely the leader of the house church which met in their home. Likely as not she was not just the stronger character but the leader of the two of them. - BereanInsights.org⁶

2. Priscilla, along with Aquila, teach better theology and doctrine. The Greek word for “explained” or “expounded” is “ἐξέθετο” (exethento), which literally means “to set forth, declare, expound, and explain”. In other words, Priscilla – along with her husband Aquila – corrects the theology of the younger man, Apollos; together they **taught** this young man about Jesus Christ.
3. Priscilla may have instructed Apollos for a long time. Most people typically take this to be a one-time event; however, there is no specified length of time. Apollos may have stayed and learned from Priscilla and Aquila over a period of days, weeks, months, or even years. Depending on how much more he had to learn, this could have taken awhile.
4. Priscilla and Aquila – again in that order – are traveling companions of Paul. (See Acts 18:18.) Since they spent a lot of time with him, surely Paul would have told Priscilla to sit down and learn in silence if that was what was required of her. She wouldn’t have had the audacity to

4 I say “usually” because this was a tradition, not a law.

5 Note that in Acts 18:2, Paul meets Aquila and his wife, Priscilla; this would match the societal order. However, when it came to instructing Apollos, Priscilla takes the lead.

6 Two notes on this. First, the website is <https://www.bereaninsights.org/bible-gem-1737-priscilla-is-placed-before-aquila-for-a-reason-acts-181-4>. Second, this site was founded by Ian and Tania Vail of Wycliffe Bible Translators.

teach a man...unless somehow she was convinced that it was appropriate.⁷

At no point in this story do we find Paul – or Luke – condemning Priscilla for daring to teach a man. We don't find censure, rebuke, or a command to "learn in silence".

If Paul intended for the declaration in 1 Timothy to bind all women in all places for all times, then this would have been the perfect opportunity to role-model it. Paul could have told Luke, "Do you see this woman? She should sit down and learn in silence! How dare she get involved in teaching a man? Doesn't she know that Eve fell first? Make sure you put it in your book, Luke, that I disapprove of all women teaching everywhere at all times!"

And yet we don't find that here, do we?

Instead, we find a beautiful story of a husband-and-wife team who come together to teach a talented young man about Jesus Christ. Both correct Apollos, both are involved in teaching him a new way, and both see the fruits of his ministry. (See Acts 18:27.)

Oh, and Paul DOES mention Priscilla and Aquila again. If you read Romans 16:3-5, Paul refers to them as "my co-workers in the ministry of Christ". Note the name order in the verse – it's Priscilla and then Aquila.⁸ Also note that they are BOTH named as "συνεργούς" (synergous) or "fellow workers"; not that Aquila is the primary worker and Priscilla remains silent or only works with women.⁹

Speaker For God: Huldah (2 Kings 22, 2 Chronicles 34)

The final woman whose story I want to dig in to as part of this paper is Huldah. The introduction to this story is found in 2 Kings 22, starting in verse 8:

Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the court secretary, "I have found the Book of the Law in the LORD's Temple!" Then Hilkiah gave the scroll to Shaphan, and he read it.

Shaphan went to the king and reported, "Your officials have turned over the money collected at the Temple of the LORD to the workers and supervisors at the Temple." Shaphan also told the king, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a scroll." So Shaphan read it to the king.

When the king heard what was written in the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes in despair. - 2 Kings 22:8-11 (NLT)

Judah has had some good kings, and some not-so-good kings. In this part of their history, they have Josiah, a good king. He takes over as king at eight-years old; and is likely around 26 at this time. As

7 Also note that Luke, the author of Acts and another traveling companion of Paul, does NOT condemn Priscilla for teaching.

8 This happens again in 2 Timothy 4:19.

9 Some will point out that in 1 Corinthians 16:19, they are listed as "Aquila and Priscilla". This by no means negates the argument, as it's possible that: (a) Aquila was the more important person in the leadership of their church home; or (b) the role was equally shared, which would result in the man being listed first.

part of his reign, he seeks to restore the nation of Judah and their worship of God.

However, in the process of rebuilding, the men find a scroll of the Book of the Law – whether this is the entire first five books of the Bible or just the book of Deuteronomy, we’re not sure. What we do know is that they’re upset that Judah has fallen away from following God! To set matters right, they need to find guidance.

So, what do they do?

Then [King Josiah] gave these orders to Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Acbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the court secretary, and Asaiah the king’s personal adviser: “Go to the Temple and speak to the Lord for me and for the people and for all Judah. Inquire about the words written in this scroll that has been found. For the Lord’s great anger is burning against us because our ancestors have not obeyed the words in this scroll. We have not been doing everything it says we must do.”

So Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam, Acbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to the New Quarter of Jerusalem to consult with the prophet Huldah. She was the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, the keeper of the Temple wardrobe. - 2 Kings 22:12-14 (NLT)

Before we get into this, let’s take a moment and look at the key men in this story:

- King Josiah - The King of Judah. (Supreme political authority.)
- Hilkiyah - The High Priest of the Temple of God. (Supreme religious authority.)
- Shaphan - The “court secretary” (or royal scribe).
- Ahikam - The son of Shaphan (a royal scribe); he also befriends and protects Jeremiah.
- Acbor - The son of the prophet Micaiah of Samaria.
- Asaiah - A servant of King Josiah. (Probably an officer in the court.)
- Shallum - The keeper of the Temple wardrobe.

These men represent the best, the brightest, the most well-educated men in all the land of Judah. And when they discover that Judah hasn’t been keeping the Book of the Law, who do they turn to for advice? Huldah...a woman.

In all fairness, Huldah is more than just “a woman”; she’s a prophetess, someone who speaks for God. And what is her response?

She said to them, “The LORD, the God of Israel, has spoken! Go back and tell the man who sent you, ‘This is what the LORD says: I am going to bring disaster on this city and its people. All the words written in the scroll that the king of Judah has read will come true. For my people have abandoned me and offered sacrifices to pagan gods, and I am very angry with them for everything they have done. My anger will burn against this place, and it will not be quenched.’

“But go to the king of Judah who sent you to seek the LORD and tell him: ‘This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says concerning the message you have just heard: You were sorry and humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I said against

this city and its people—that this land would be cursed and become desolate. You tore your clothing in despair and wept before me in repentance. And I have indeed heard you, says the LORD. So I will not send the promised disaster until after you have died and been buried in peace. You will not see the disaster I am going to bring on this city.’”

So they took her message back to the king. - 2 Kings 22:15-20 (NLT)

From this section, we see some key points:

1. Huldah is a prophetess. She actually delivers messages from God.
2. Huldah is considered knowledgeable. Why do I say that? Because when the men needed wisdom, their first thought was to go to Huldah!
3. Huldah is given permission to speak on behalf of God. Notice that no one doubts that what she says is actually from God. They may not like the message, but they don't question it!
4. Huldah's words were listened to and respected by all those who went.

At no time does anyone in this story say, “What? Go ask a woman? Let's find a male prophet, instead!” No, instead, when the wisest men needed counsel, they went to a person who God had ordained to speak on His behalf; in this case, a woman.

If they had wanted to find someone other than a woman, why not simply ask the High Priest, Hilikiah? Acbor's father, Micaiah, was a prophet; why not seek out his insight? Actually, with the sheer number of male leaders gathered together, why didn't they simply make a decision on their own? If women aren't allowed to teach or speak, why not use the wisdom of the men?

In Huldah's case, she is intentionally sought out by the male leaders, she speaks words of truth – her prophecies come true, and the men are satisfied with what she shared.

If God doesn't have a problem with Huldah speaking for Him in the Old Testament, then why is it such a problem when it comes to the New Testament?

Can Women Be Prophetesses?

Continuing along with the example of Huldah, let's dig further into the idea of, “Can women be prophetesses?” According to Gotquestions.org, a prophet / prophetess was:

In a general sense, a prophet is a person who speaks God's truth to others. The English word prophet comes from the Greek word prophetes, which can mean “one who speaks forth” or “advocate.” Prophets are also called “seers,” because of their spiritual insight or their ability to “see” the future.

In the Bible, prophets often had both a teaching and revelatory role, declaring God's

truth on contemporary issues while also revealing details about the future.

Prophets had the task of faithfully speaking God's Word to the people. They were instrumental in guiding the nation of Israel and establishing the church. God's household is "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:20).

More than 133 named prophets are mentioned in the Bible, including 16 women. (Source: Gotquestions.org)

The sixteen prophetesses mentioned in the article above include:

- Mirriam (Exodus 15:20)
- Deborah (Judges 4:4)
- Huldah (2 Kings 22:14)
- The wife of Isaiah (Isaiah 8:3)¹⁰
- Anna (Luke 2:36-38)
- Four daughters of Philip the Evangelist (Acts 21:8-9)

Also, in Joel 2, we're told this:

"Then, after doing all those things, I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions. In those days I will pour out my Spirit even on servants—men and women alike." - Joel 2:28-29 (NLT)

If you read this in Hebrew, both verses specifically refer to men and women prophesying. In verse 28, it's "your daughters" (Hebrew: וּבְנוֹתֵיכֶם); and in verse 29 it's "maidservants" (Hebrew: וְעַבְדָּוֹתַי).¹¹

Clearly in both the Old and New Testaments, women are allowed to speak for God, to teach truth, to reveal God's will, to guide the nation of Israel, and then later to help to establish the church. If God was fine with this in the past, what has changed to make this displeasing to Him?

Can Women Be Deacons/Deaconesses?

While this may seem like a tangent, it's still dealing with the role of women in leadership; and, to be completely honest, I find this to be a fascinating question due to the counter-arguments, which we'll cover shortly.

First, to fully understand what we're talking about, please check out *Appendix B: Definition And Uses Of "Deacon"* to understand the role of the Deacon.

Literally in Greek, "Διάκονοι" (diakonoi) means "servant or minister (to give aid to)". But therein lies

¹⁰ In the Hebrew, the words are, "And I went to the prophetess and she conceived..." Some modern translations fail to mention the "prophetess" part!

¹¹ Thanks Dean for pointing out these verses!

the problem: should we call these people “Deacons” or should they simply be referred to as “servants”?

In the Traditional view, when this word is applied to men, they use the term “Deacon” and it refers to a role of authority in the church. When this **same word** is applied to women, however, it’s taken to mean that they are simply “servants” – not leaders – who are there to minister to the needs of others.

But Paul seems to indicate that there is at least one female Deaconess:

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a deacon in the church in Cenchrea. Welcome her in the Lord as one who is worthy of honor among God’s people. Help her in whatever she needs, for she has been helpful to many, and especially to me. - Romans 16:1-2 (NLT)

In the counter-arguments against Phoebe’s role as a “deaconess”, there are:

- She is only a “servant” who has helped Paul; not a “Deacon” in the leadership sense.
- She IS a Deaconess, but she only serves women.

Neither of these views is supported by exegesis, but they can come from eisegesis. If we read our views into the text, we can make the Bible say whatever we want. In this case, though, what we ARE told about Phoebe is:

1. Phoebe is commended by Paul. The Greek words used here is “Συνίστημι”, which is a compound word. The first word, “syn”, means “union, together with”; and the second word is “histemi” which means “to stand together, to support”. Literally Paul says, “Phoebe and I stand together with each other.” That’s praise, indeed, coming from Paul!
2. Phoebe is called a “sister”.
3. Phoebe is called a “διάκονον” (diakonon), a “servant”. Is this simply “a servant”, or does it mean “church leadership”? We’re not told. However, since it’s the **same** word used for men who serve as Deacons (church leadership), why would this not apply to her?
4. Phoebe is from Cenchrea. (Many believe that Phoebe actually carries the letter from Paul to the Church in Rome, although this is NOT specifically stated in the text.)
5. Phoebe is to be received “worthily”. (The Greek word here literally means “in a manner worthy of”.)
6. The church is to assist Phoebe in whatever she may need.
7. Phoebe is called a “patroness” of many. The Greek word here is “προστάτις” (prostatis), which literally means “a female guardian or protector”. Furthermore, the Greek says, “*Also for she a patroness of many has been, and of me myself.*” In some way, Phoebe actually has been a “protector” of Paul, although we aren’t told the circumstances.

With these credentials, is it probable that Phoebe is just a “servant”? It seems unlikely. With all of Paul’s recommendations and commendations, it seems likely that Phoebe IS a “Deaconess”, a leader in the Church.

Based on all of this, I feel the “burden of proof” is on those who argue against Phoebe’s role as “Deaconess”.¹²

Can Women Be Apostles?

In my original draft for this paper, I missed someone who could potentially change our perception of the role of women in leadership positions: Junias. Turn to Romans 16:7:

Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews, who were in prison with me. They are highly respected among the apostles and became followers of Christ before I did. - Romans 16:7 (NLT)

In Greek, it says this:

Greet Andronicus and Junias, kinsmen of me and fellow prisoners with me who are of note among the apostles, who also before me were in Christ. - Romans 16:7 (GRK)

From this we see that:

1. Junias is a fellow countryman of Paul. (She is a Jewess.)¹³
2. Junias is in jail.
3. Junias is noteworthy.
4. Junias became a Christian early on.
5. Junias may have been an “apostle”. (In Greek, this could mean either an apostle in the literal sense; or it could mean one who is a designated messenger of the churches and who is sent out on important business.)

Furthermore, the word “ἐπίσημοι” (episemoi) which is translated “of note” or “highly respected” can also mean “illustrious”.¹⁴ In other words, Andronicus and Junias may be “illustrious apostles”; someone that other apostles should take special notice of!

While there is some debate over the proper translation of this phrase, it’s interesting how the debate is played out. For those from the Complementarianism (Traditional) camp, the phrase is translated to

12 Also, some people interpret 1 Timothy 3:11 to be a special command to Deaconesses in the manner in which they must both speak and live. Since there IS debate on this, I chose to use the easier example of Phoebe in establishing the role of Deaconess.

13 The word “syngeneis” can literally mean a relative, so she may be related to Paul in some fashion.

14 Thayer’s Greek Lexicon.

mean that Junias is someone simply of note; however she is NOT a leader in the church. For those from the Egalitarianism camp, the phrase is translated to mean that Junias is an apostle; this means that women can serve as leaders in the church.

In the end, though, we need to be VERY careful to not read too much into this text, either for or against the argument of the role of women in ministry. This passage is included just as another piece worth considering.

What Other Roles For Women Does Paul Specify?

A common question is, “What does Paul allow women to do?” To answer this, we need to look at 1 Corinthians 11:2-16. (Bear in mind that this is the same book that contains the prohibition on women speaking in church!)

(2) I am so glad that you always keep me in your thoughts, and that you are following the teachings I passed on to you. (3) But there is one thing I want you to know: The head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. (4) A man dishonors his head if he covers his head while praying or prophesying. (5) But a woman dishonors her head if she prays or prophesies without a covering on her head, for this is the same as shaving her head. (6) Yes, if she refuses to wear a head covering, she should cut off all her hair! But since it is shameful for a woman to have her hair cut or her head shaved, she should wear a covering.

(7) A man should not wear anything on his head when worshiping, for man is made in God's image and reflects God's glory. And woman reflects man's glory. (8) For the first man didn't come from woman, but the first woman came from man. (9) And man was not made for woman, but woman was made for man. (10) For this reason, and because the angels are watching, a woman should wear a covering on her head to show she is under authority.

(11) But among the Lord's people, women are not independent of men, and men are not independent of women. (12) For although the first woman came from man, every other man was born from a woman, and everything comes from God.

(13) Judge for yourselves. Is it right for a woman to pray to God in public without covering her head? (14) Isn't it obvious that it's disgraceful for a man to have long hair? (15) And isn't long hair a woman's pride and joy? For it has been given to her as a covering. (16) But if anyone wants to argue about this, I simply say that we have no other custom than this, and neither do God's other churches. - 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 (NLT)

Notice in verse 5 it talks says, “*But a woman dishonors her head if she prays or prophesies without a covering on her head, for this is the same as shaving her head.*” In Greek, for those of you wondering, it would literally be:

Every now woman praying or prophesying, uncovered with the head, dishonors the head

of her; one for it is, and the same, with having been shaven. - 1 Corinthians 11:5 (GRK)

In this case, Paul says that women can both pray (proseuchomenē) AND prophesy (prophēteuōusa) within the church meetings; his only restriction is that they must have their head covered.¹⁵ But how can they do that in the general meeting AND sit in silence?

Please note that any attempt to argue that these women were only praying and prophesying in a “women’s church service” is insufficient, when based on the context. Verses four and five are linked in the Greek, with no division between them. Since verse four speaks of men praying and prophesying in the group; then it’s logical to assume that verse five is speaking about women praying and prophesying in the group.

In this case, if we take 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 as authoritative, then Paul is confused and contradicting his own arguments. If that’s the case, then the Bible is contradicting itself, something that it cannot do if it is “God-breathed”. (2 Timothy 3:16)

If we consider 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 as a gloss, then Paul’s arguments make sense. It falls upon those who disagree, then, to make the argument as to why Paul states that women can speak in 1 Corinthians 11 and then, then denies women the ability to speak in 1 Corinthians 14. (For more information on this, please check out *Appendix D: Excerpt From The First Epistle To The Corinthians by Fee*)

What About Galatians 3:28 And Equality?

A common verse used to promote Egalitarianism is Galatians 3:28, which says:

There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus. - Galatians 3:28 (NLT)

Unfortunately, this verse is taken out of context. If you read Galatians 3:23-29, the context is clearly about salvation by faith in Jesus Christ alone; it is not referring to the roles of men and women. Because of that, it is actually not relevant to the discussion at hand.

As with the issues in our interpretation of 1 Corinthians, 1 Timothy, and Titus, we need to be sure that we don’t create issues with interpretation on the other side by taking Galatians 3:28 out of context.

Special Consideration #1

There are a couple of times that the root-word “presbytr” is used with a feminine-only ending. One example we have is this:

*Similarly, teach the **older women** (presbytidas: noun-Accusative, Feminine, Plural) to live in a way that honors God. They must not slander others or be heavy drinkers.*

¹⁵ Before someone goes off on a tangent on this, they should look closely at verse 16. The Greek word used for “custom” is συνήθειαν (synetheian) which literally means “a custom, tradition, or habit”. It’s NOT a “law, commandment, or decree”. Also, within Jewish culture, a shaved head symbolized mourning, which could send a wrong message to the community. Gordon Fee’s commentary goes into the “head covering” question in greater detail, if you’re interested.

Instead, they should teach others what is good. These older women must train the younger women to love their husbands and their children, to live wisely and be pure, to work in their homes, to do good, and to be submissive to their husbands. Then they will not bring shame on the word of God. - Titus 2:3-5 (NLT)

Literally, this is the same word as “Elder”, but is referring to a woman only. More importantly, these “female elders” are supposed to:

- Live a life above reproach.
- Not slander others.
- Not be a drunkard.
- Be a “teacher of the right”.
- They are to train those less mature.

If you look at this list of requirements, it matches many of the points required to be an Elder in 1 Timothy 3. Also, please notice that in Titus 2:3, in the Greek, it does not specify WHO the women are to teach, just that “*they should teach others what is good*”.

Also, within context, much of Titus 2 is about teaching. The first two groups mentioned are “older men” (Titus 2:2) and “older women” (Titus 2:3); but the Greek could literally mean “Elder Men” and “Elder Women”. Then it talks about teaching young men “the truth” (Titus 2:6-8).

Is this an indication of women as Elders? Perhaps. Is it conclusive? No. It’s just another piece of the puzzle to consider.

Special Consideration #2

What do you do with a church that simply has no men who meet these criteria? I was listening to Dr. Tony Evans talk about why there are so many female Elders in black, inner-city churches. The reason is that the men simply aren’t there. (He was calling for men to step up in the message I listened to.)

Furthermore, a commentary on 1 Timothy says this:

The fact is that there is no single “biblical” form of church government, if we recognize the structure reflected in the pastorals as being local and suited for their times and places. No matter what, some form of structure and government must be developed for any continuing fellowship, and any claim by a church that their structure is the only form set forth in the New Testament is unwarranted.

The practice of the churches in East Africa is a living example of a different structure than we take for granted in the States. While we struggle with the problems of declining membership and an over-abundance of clergy, they struggle with rapid growth and a severe shortage of clergy. Other than in a few metropolitan areas, most pastors...have the oversight of ten to twenty congregations! ... To regard them as pastors in our American and European sense of the word is impossible. In reality, they are overseers of their churches. (And women are being ordained in growing numbers in all these

denominations.) (Source: The Communicator's Commentary, by Gary W. Demarest)

The question is: Do you ordain women and allow them to serve when there's a lack of men who meet the criteria...or do you simply shut the church down and end the ministry?

If we take the English translation of 1 Timothy literally, then we should shut down the church and allow people to go to Hell, since only men are allowed to teach. Is this an acceptable approach?

Special Consideration #3

I had planned to make the previous point my last, but I wanted to bring up one final thought: What are we to do with the famous female missionaries in history? Mary Slessor? Amy Carmichael? Elisabeth Elliot? They taught men, built churches, and fulfilled the role of Elder. Even Corrie Ten Boom taught large groups – including men – about the nature of God's forgiveness.

Is their ministry invalid because they were female? Were they sinful because of their work? I leave that to the determination of you, the reader.

Conclusion

Okay, it's taken a lot of time, we've covered a lot of ground, and, if you printed this out, we've killed a lot of trees, too. So, what's the conclusion we can draw?

First, we've seen that the texts used in the Traditional View (Complementarianism) don't actually say what we think they say. Do they say women can't be Pastors or Elders? No. Do they say women can be Pastors or Elders? No.

Second, we've seen that God has used women in roles of leadership. They've taught men, they've governed men, they've led men, they've spoken for God, and when they gave directions, men obeyed. Does this mean that women can't be leaders of men? No. Does it mean that in all places, at all times, women can be leaders of men? No.

Again, as I stated at the very beginning, we need to be very careful to let the Bible say what it says. In no cases do we find either a universal prohibition, nor do we find a universal promotion of women as Pastors, Elders, or leaders of men.

Am I right with what I've stated so far? I'd like to believe that I am, but there's always the possibility that I've made a mistake. My knowledge of both Hebrew and Greek, as well as the culture of the time, is far from complete. It's even possible that I made a mistake in English; I'm human and these things happen. However, based on my research, I think there IS enough evidence to warrant further consideration of the roles of women in ministry.

Because of this, I think that ultimately this argument comes down more to "comfort" than "command":

If you cannot go to a church where a woman is a Pastor or accept the leadership of female

Elders...then don't. If it will cause you to stumble in your faith-journey, then it's wrong for you.

If you feel that a woman is allowed to be a Pastor or Elder and are comfortable with women serving in those roles...then do.¹⁶

Finally, in Romans 14, Paul talks about eating food sacrificed to idols. While that's a totally separate conversation, Paul does start out the chapter with a verse that I think is relevant to this topic:

Accept other believers who are weak in faith, and don't argue with them about what they think is right or wrong. - Romans 14:1 (NLT)

No matter what side you come down on – Complementarianism or Egalitarianism – don't look down on other believers for their viewpoints. Instead, accept them where they're at, love them like brothers and sisters in Christ, discuss your differences, and don't fall into the trap of arguing with each other.

We can disagree without being disagreeable.

One Final Thought...

As I set about to answer the NDQs posed to me by this young lady all those years ago, I realized that the question is not "SHOULD women be preachers?" but "WHY do women want to be preachers?" In fact, that's a question for everyone to consider:

Why do you want to teach? To lead others? To serve?

If you're doing it because you want:

- A steady paycheck.
- Attention.
- Power.
- Respect.
- Security.
- To be in charge.
- To be looked up to.
- To be "seen".
- To "correct" others.
- To defy "tradition".
- To have equality.
- To prove you have "the gift".
- To show that you're "right".

Or any one of a thousand other "selfish" reasons, then you will NEVER be successful, even if you're leading world-wide crusades and millions of people are coming to salvation through faith in Christ. Why? Because you're doing it for you, not God! Oh, and by the way, this is true for both women

¹⁶ In either case, whether it's a male or female leading, be sure that they are teaching sound doctrine and role-modeling Christ in their words and actions.

AND men...

On the other hand, if you're doing it because:

- You feel that God has gifted you in that direction.
- You want to serve God by serving others.
- You're willing to humble yourself and sacrifice so that others can see Christ in you.
- You're willing to pay the price.

Or any one of a thousand other "Godly" reasons, then you should look into it and prayerfully consider it. Oh, and by the way, this is true for both women AND men...

In the end, your motives for seeking to be a preacher are more important to me than your gender is...

Appendix A: Definition And Uses Of “Elder”

The two words used for Elder are also translated as: Elder, Overseer, Pastor, Shepherd, Teacher. In the Bible, these terms are frequently plural, meaning that there is supposed to be more than one leader / teacher within the church.¹⁷

Note: For this paper, we’re forgoing the discussion of “poimaine” or “pastor/shepherd”. Instead, we want to focus on the specific question of “overseer” or “elder”.

The Biblical qualifications for an Elder are:

- Be devoted to prayer. (Acts 6:3)
- A life above reproach. (Literally “without blame”.) (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6-7)
- Be faithful to his wife. (Literally “a one-woman man”.) (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6)
- Be sober. (Literally not intoxicated; free from life-dominating influences.) (1 Timothy 3:2)
- Must use self-control. (Literally “well-balanced from God’s perspective”.) (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8)
- Be respectable (Literally “ordered”.) (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:7)
- Be hospitable. (Literally, “loving strangers”.) (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8)
- Be able to teach. (Acts 6:3, 1 Timothy 3:2)
- Be not a drunkard. (Literally “addicted to wine”.) (1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7)
- Not “a striker”. (Literally, a contentious person, a brawler.) (1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7)
- Gentle. (Derived from “equitable, fair”.) (1 Timothy 3:3)
- Peaceable. (Abstains from fighting.) (1 Timothy 3:3)
- Not loving money. (Not avaricious.) (1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7)
- Needs to be able to manage his own house. (1 Timothy 3:4)
- Have well-behaved, Christian children. (1 Timothy 3:4-5, Titus 1:6)
- Not new to the church / a new believer. (1 Timothy 3:6, Titus 1:9)
- Have a good testimony from those outside the church. (1 Timothy 3:7)

The Biblical role of an Elder is:

- Church leader. (Titus 1:7)
- Educate the people. (Titus 1:9)
- Encourage others. (Titus 1:9)
- Guide the church. (1 Peter 5:2)
- Invite others to their home. (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8)
- Leader of prayer. (Acts 6:3, James 5:14)
- Manager. (1 Timothy 3:5, Titus 1:7)
- Role-model. (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8)
- Servant. (1 Peter 5:2-3)
- Teacher. (Acts 6:3, 1 Timothy 3:2)

All uses of the word “Elder”:

Episkopen - Overseer (Noun – Active, Feminine, Singular)

¹⁷ Paul seems to use the words *Episkopen* and *Presbyter* interchangeably in Acts 20.

Acts 1:20

- Episkopes* - Overseer (Noun – Genitive, Feminine, Singular)
Luke 19:44, 1 Timothy 3:1, 1 Peter 2:12
- Presbyteras* - Elder Female (Adjective – Active, Feminine, Plural)
1 Timothy 5:2
- Presytero* - Elder Male (Adjective – Dative, Masculine, Singular)
1 Timothy 5:1
- Presbyteron* - Member of the Sanhedrin / Christian leader (Adjective – Genitive, Masculine, Plural)
Matthew 15:2, 16:21, 26:47, 27:12, 27:41, 28:12, Mark 7:3, 7:5, 8:31, 14:43, 15:1, Luke 9:22, John 8:9, Acts 15:4, 16:4, 24:1, Revelation 5:5, 5:6, 5:11, 7:11, 7:13, 14:3
- Presbyteroi* - Member of the Sanhedrin / Christian leader (Adjective – Nominative, Masculine, Plural)
Matthew 21:23, 26:3, 26:57, 27:1, 27:20, Mark 11:27, 14:53, Acts 2:17, 4:8, 4:23, 15:6, 15:23, 21:18, 25:15, 1 Timothy 5:17, Hebrews 11:2, Revelation 4:10, 5:8, 5:14, 11:16, 19:4
- Presbyterois* - Member of the Sanhedrin / Christian leader (Adjective – Dative, Masculine, Plural)
Matthew 27:3, Luke 20:1, Acts 15:22, 23:14, 1 Peter 5:5
- Presbyteros* - Member of the Sanhedrin / Christian leader (Adjective – Nominative, Masculine, Singular)
Luke 15:25, 2 John 1:1, 3 John 1:1
- Presbyterou* - An elder (Adjective – Genitive, Masculine, Singular)
1 Timothy 5:19
- Presbyterous* - Member of the Sanhedrin / Christian leader (Adjective – Active, Masculine, Plural)
Luke 7:3, 22:52, Acts 4:5, 6:12, 11:30, 14:23, 15:2, 20:17, Titus 1:5, James 5:14, 1 Peter 5:1, Revelation 4:4

Appendix B: Definition And Uses Of “Deacon”

This role is appointed to deal with the physical needs of the church. In Acts 6, seven men are chosen to serve. Although they are not called “Deacons” in Acts 6:2-4, their role seems to indicate that these were the first to fulfill this role.

Note: The Greek word “diakonos” means “through the dirt”. The Deacons in the church are the ones who get their “hands dirty” by serving others, reaching out, and helping.

The Biblical qualifications for a Deacon is:

- Have a good testimony. (Acts 6:3)
- Full of the Spirit. (Acts 6:3)
- Full of wisdom. (Acts 6:3)
- Appointed to the task of serving. (Acts 6:3)
- Deeply respected. (1 Timothy 3:8)
- Honest / not deceitful. (1 Timothy 3:8)
- Not a drunkard. (1 Timothy 3:8)
- Not greedy or a thief. (1 Timothy 3:8)
- Doctrinally sound. (1 Timothy 3:9)
- Tested. (1 Timothy 3:10)
- Have Godly homes. (1 Timothy 3:11-12)
- Must be willing to “serve well”. (1 Timothy 3:13)

The Biblical role of a Deacon is:

- Undefined. Acts 6:1 indicates that they are to distribute food to the widows. Other than that, there is no set “job description” within the Bible.

All uses of the word “Deacon”:

Diakonois - Servant (Noun – Nominative, Masculine, Plural)
John 2:9, 1 Corinthians 3:5, 2 Corinthians 3:5, 6:4, 11:15, 11:23, 1 Timothy 3:12

Diakonois - Servant (Noun – Dative, Masculine, Plural)
Matthew 22:13, John 2:5, Philippians 1:1

Diakonon - Servant (Noun – Accusative, Masculine, Singular)
Romans 15:8, 16:1

Diakonos - Servant (Noun – Nominative, Masculine, Singular)
Matthew 20:26, 23:11, Mark 9:35, 10:43, John 12:26, Romans 13:4, Galatians 2:17, Ephesians 3:7, 6:21, Colossians 1:7, 1:23, 1:25, 4:7, 1 Timothy 4:6

Diakonous - Servant (Noun – Accusative, Masculine, Plural)
2 Corinthians 3:6, 1 Timothy 3:8

Appendix C: The Modern “Church” And “Pastors”

One additional thing we should consider are the phrases “the church” and “pastor”.

The original “church” was a group of people gathering together in houses. (Romans 16:5) During their meetings, they would take turns praying, reading and studying the Scriptures, fellowshiping with one another, and breaking bread together. (Acts 2:42)

The first “church building” in the world was probably the St. Georgeous Church in Jordan, built around 230 A.D. At that time, a dedicated “priesthood” would have begun to lead the church, probably based on the Jewish hierarchy of priests found in the Temple. While this was the first step toward our “modern churches”; it was a significant step AWAY from the New Testament model of the church.

As time went on, churches began to select a “pastor”, one man who was responsible for leading, teaching, and shepherding the church. This is in contradiction to the idea of a team of Elders who were responsible for leading, teaching, and prayer.

In other words, the idea of the entire church revolving around just one man is NOT Biblical, either. (Unless, of course, that “man” is Jesus!) God intended for multiple people within the church to fulfill these roles, not just one. In fact, churches that are based on this new model are more likely to fall into error, since it’s only the input of one man that decides what is – or is NOT – allowed in the church!

Why do I bring this up?

The NDQ was, “Is it wrong for women to be preachers?” As I’ve attempted to demonstrate in this document, the Bible allows for women to teach men, lead men, and to speak for God. Also, as we’ve just discussed, the structure of the modern church, along with the role of pastor, is not the same as what’s described in the New Testament.

Because of all that, I would argue that women CAN be preachers, since our modern way of doing things is based on man’s design, not God’s.

Appendix D: Excerpt From The First Epistle To The Corinthians by Fee

I reference this in dealing with the verses about the role of women in 1 Corinthians 14, however I felt it would be beneficial to include part of the text here, since many people don't have access to this work:

Although these two verse are found in all known manuscripts, either here or at the end of the chapter, the two text-critical criteria of transcriptional and intrinsic probability combine to cast considerable doubt on their authenticity.

First, on the matter of transcriptional probability, Bengel's first principle must rule: That form of the text is more likely the original which best explains the emergence of all the others. In this case there are three options: Either (1) Paul wrote these words at this place and they were deliberately transposed to a position after v. 40; or (2) the reverse of this, they were written originally after v. 40 and someone moved them forward to a position after v. 33; or (3) they were not part of the original text, but were a very early marginal gloss that was subsequently placed in the text at two different places. Of these options, the third is easily the one that best fits Bengel's first principle. One can give good historical reasons both for the gloss itself and for its dual position in the text; but one is especially hard pressed to account for either options 1 or 2 had the other been original.

Although the majority of interpreters assume that option 1 is original, they generally do so without asking the historical question as to how then the Western text came into existence. The solution that is sometimes offered, that someone in the early second century "edited" the text in this fashion "to find a more appropriate location," seems to be unhistorical – on two grounds: (a) displacements of this kind do not occur elsewhere in the NT; and (b) no adequate reason can be found for such a displacement were these words originally in the text after v. 33. It is simply a modern invention that someone in the early church would have been troubled by the placement of these words in the text, since all who comment on it find the arrangement very logical. It is therefore most highly improbable that with this text before him it would ever have occurred to a copyist to take such an unprecedented step as to rearrange Paul's argument – especially so since in this case one can scarcely demonstrate that the "displacement" makes better sense! The Western text may not be shunted aside. All the surviving evidence indicates that this was the only way 1 Corinthians appeared in the Latin church for at least three hundred years. Those who wish to maintain the authenticity of these verse must at least offer an adequate answer as to how this arrangement came into existence if Paul wrote them originally as our vv. 34-35.

Second, once one recognizes the improbability of authenticity on transcriptional grounds, then several questions of intrinsic probability are more easily answered: (1) One can make much better sense of the structure of Paul's argument without these intruding sentences. As noted above, the balanced guidelines for tongues with interpretation and prophecy with discernment are fittingly brought to a conclusion on the twin notes of vv. 32-33, that the "spirits of prophets are subject to prophets" and that orderly worship fits the character of God, being what is found (or laid down) in "all the churches of the saints." Then, in typical fashion, the mention of "all the

churches” sends Paul off on an ad hominem argument against those in the community who in the name of being pneumatikos (“spiritual”) are leading this church in another direction. Thus, in light of the “other churches,” he asks rhetorically, “Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached?” This rhetorical aside (vv. 36-38), which at the same time is a direct confrontation between him and them over the crucial matters that divide them, is then followed (vv. 39-40) by a concluding wrap-up of the whole matter of chaps. 12-14. This reading of the text makes so much sense of all the data that even if one were to conclude that vv. 34-35 are authentic, they would appear to be best understood as something of an afterthought to the present argument. (Source: The First Epistle To The Corinthians, by Gordon D. Fee, Eerdmans Publishing Company, pgs. 699-701)

If time and resources allow, I would recommend that you read the full article – this being only a portion of it – in the original work. Fee’s argument goes on for pages in the book and includes citations and support from numerous other documents, as well.

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