

A BIBLICAL EXAMINATION OF WOMEN AS LEADERS IN THE COMMUNITY OF GOD

Imagine this scenario: Bobby becomes a Christian, accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior through baptism and receives the gift of the Holy Spirit. Bobby becomes a faithful member of a local body of believers. Bobby grows in Christ. Bobby's spiritual gift is to teach or lead in the church. Bobby decides to go to Bible College to hone skills that will enhance the gift and flame the passion to do the task. Bobby is sound doctrinally and morally and has a heart for leadership. Bobby meets all the qualifications for leadership in the Body of Christ. Oh, and by the way, Bobby's full name is Roberta.

What will be the determining factor in this woman's ability to serve as a pastor, teacher or elder? "We've never done it that way before" (read TRADITION)? The final authority on whether women should be "authoritative" leaders in Christ's church cannot be tradition. This issue cannot be determined by 20th and 21st century phenomena like the Women's Liberation Movement (nor should the church make a stance based on a knee-jerk reaction to such phenomena). It cannot be determined by personal preference or opinion. The final authority for the church in all issues rests with the One who created her (the church) and gave Himself as a ransom for her.

It is the contention of this author that the universal principles of the Bible points to an egalitarian¹ expression of ministry roles for women as well as men in the body of Christ. This study will look at the idea of women as leaders throughout the Bible. What

¹There are four basic camps when discussing the issue of women in ministry. Two seem to use Scripture to push an agenda beyond the bounds of the Bible's intended purpose. The chauvinist approach carries the mentality that women are second-class citizens. The feminist approach, on the other hand, tries to say that there are no gender differences and women are entitled to rule.

The other two options are much more centered on what God has to say about the matter. Complementarians teach that God created men and women as equals, **but** with different gender-defined roles/ministries. Egalitarians teach that God created men and women equal **and** calls gifted persons into all aspects of public ministry regardless of gender.

does the Old Testament have to say about women in ministry? Did Jesus view women as leaders among His disciples? How did the early church recorded in the Book of Acts look at women in leadership roles? What was Paul's attitude towards women who served alongside him? If he was agreeable to female leadership, why did he write (under the influence of the Holy Spirit) three seemingly contradictory passages to the Corinthian church and to his co-worker Timothy in Ephesus? Are there other key issues that need to be considered?

BIBLICAL INTERPRETATION

Before we can get to these questions, something needs to be said about biblical interpretation. How do we determine what the Bible says?

Presuppositions

As human beings, we develop as we grow older a certain way of looking at life. Our family of origin, our experiences, our education, our culture and other variables help shape how we perceive everything. This is also true of how we approach the Bible. Often we come to God's Word with preconceived ideas on what it says.

This can be relatively harmless. For instance, how many wise men came to see Jesus at the manger? The traditional answer, based on the number of gifts, is three. But we do not know that there were three wise men from the Bible. And they did not come to the manger to see Him, they went to see Jesus at a house in Bethlehem (Matt 2:11).

But when it comes to key theological issues, our presuppositions need to be flexible enough to be adapted by God's Word. This is not a bad thing. If our desire is to become more like Jesus, if we want to reflect Christ to the world in which we live, then

we must develop flexible hearts and minds.²

What is necessary in our study of the Bible is to come up with “self-evident first principles of thought that transcend every perspective, and act the same way for all people, all times, and all cultures” (Kaiser, p. 5).

Principles

How do we arrive at these universal principles as people of the Book? First, we must look for the “whole council of God.” In other words, when dealing with a particular issue we must do our homework to see what the consistent message is throughout the Bible. We cannot allow ourselves the luxury of the easy road of finding passages that agree with what we think or believe.

Second, we must read Scripture in context. Ben Witherington gave this helpful advice about context at the 2007 Strauss Lectureship at Lincoln Christian College and Seminary, “A text without a context is a pretext . . . for whatever you want it to say.” The context includes elements like history, culture, and the broader scriptural context.³ Context questions also include how a particular verse or passage fits into the overall picture of Scripture.

Before we look at what the Word says about the role of women, then, we need to ask another question. What was the prevailing mindset about women in the cultural setting of the ancient world? That is where we must now turn.

²R. T. France likens the need to change our thinking on the role of women in the church with the change in thinking about the slavery issue in the 19th century. He points out that Christians realized “that slavery was not after all an essential feature of the way God had ordained human society” (p. 16).

³As students of the Bible, we need to ask contextual questions like; why did the author write this material? What issues did his audience face? What does the author say about the particular issue earlier in the letter? What do the verses immediately before and after the verse(s) in question say?

I. WOMEN AS LEADERS IN FIRST CENTURY SOCIETY

The ancient world would consistently develop and maintain gender-based roles in its culture. For the most part, the public domain belonged to the males whereas the private sphere, hearth and home, was where women belonged. There is substantial evidence that shows females involved in commerce, politics and religious practices, but that was not the norm (Toriesen, 1983). The important cultural views for our consideration are those of the Greco-Roman society and the Jewish society, the cultures in which the early church existed.

Greco-Roman Society

The prevailing mindset of the Greco-Roman world is capsulized in a saying attributed at various times to Thales, Socrates and Plato. This saying sounds similar to the common Jewish prayer which will be discussed in the Jewish society section. In this saying, “a man thanked the gods that he was not uncivilized, a slave, or a woman” (Tetlow, p. 12).

Some women were educated, carried political and economic clout and held some influence in their culture. Women did have leadership roles, especially in the context of mystery religions, but even this did not produce a sense of social equality. Neither the Greeks nor the Romans held that women were in any way equal to men.

Jewish Society

The Jews were a different story. They had the same attitude, but a different story. The difference is that they claimed that God mandated the subservient role for women. First century Jewish historian Josephus reflects the attitude of rabbinical Judaism, “The woman, says the Law, is in all things inferior to man. Let her accordingly be submissive,

not for her humiliation, but that she may be directed; for the authority has been given by God to the man” (Tetlow, p. 24).

The Mishnah, a compilation of rabbinical teaching and interpretation of the Old Testament, provides several glimpses into the Jewish view of women. Some of the rabbis taught that:

- Evil would come to men who would talk much with women.
- A woman’s testimony was not valid in a court of law.
- A woman should be bypassed for an inheritance.
- A husband could divorce his wife for just about any reason.
- For a rabbi to teach his daughter the Law was lechery.
- Women were the source of sin and death in the world.
- Women were more sensual and less rational than were men, therefore were inferior.⁴

No wonder the Jewish male was anxious to utter a prayer to “thank God that he was a Jew and not a Gentile, a free man and not a slave, *a man and not a woman*” (Bruce, p. 9, emphasis added). This was the prevailing attitude of First century Judaism, the Judaism that Jesus confronted on a regular basis. We will return to these attitudes in the section on Jesus’ views of women. We will also return to this prayer when we look at the apostle Paul. The question for our current discussion is does this prayer reflect the mind of God as recorded in the Old Testament or was it culturally driven? It is time to look at the Old Testament teaching about women.

⁴See Staton, 2001; Grenz 1995; and Belleville, 2000 for good discussions about rabbinical Judaism and its view on women. Belleville also has an excellent study of specific examples of Jewish women who held five formal roles in the synagogues; donors, heads of synagogues, elders, priestesses, and mothers of the synagogue.

II. WOMEN AS LEADERS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Did rabbinical Judaism develop its views on women from a thorough reading of the Old Testament? In their defense, they may have thought so. Apparently eisegesis, the practice of reading into the text what you want it to say, has been going on for centuries. Other than the priesthood, there is no restriction of women in leadership capacities in the Old Testament. There is no prohibition of women teaching men (Staton, 2001).

What are important to note is the number of times women play a key role in the life and leadership of Israel. Women served at the Tabernacle (Ex 38:8; 1 Sam 2:22).⁵ Women were prophets. One was a judge. If it is against God's Law for women to do these things, why, in a patriarchal society, was it allowed?

We will look at specific examples, but first there is the need to see what the Law actually says. Even more crucial to the discussion is the creation account as recorded in Genesis 1-2. So, let's start at the very beginning. . .

The Creation Principle

Complementarians put a great deal of emphasis on a "creation principle." They point to the order of creation, male before female, for justification to their argument which says that God ordained male leadership. They say that this is how Paul uses Genesis 2:22 in his writings.⁶

⁵See Kaiser, p. 7 where he deals with the presuppositions of the male translators of the Septuagint (the Greek Old Testament). One of the translators said, "The idea of women in attendance at the Tabernacle is so odious that it has to be got rid of." This is one example where prejudice has played a role in trying to demote women from important service in the kingdom of God.

⁶Schriener, a complementarian, lists six reasons from Genesis 1-3 why he thinks women are in a subordinate role.

1. God created Adam first, and then he created Eve.

Egalitarians counter with the Genesis 1 account of creation. Man was created first, but sequence does not imply authority. What does Genesis 1 say about the role of women in life and in God's plan?

Genesis 1:26-31

Then God said, "Let us make man⁷ in our image, in our likeness, and let *them* rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created *them*. God blessed *them* and said to *them*, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground." Then God said, "I give *you* every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be *yours* for food. And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds of the air and all the creatures that move on the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw all that he had made, and it was **very good**. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.⁸ (emphasis added)

Notice, first, that there is no command of God for the male to “rule over” the female. Rather, the thought is that male and female, as co-equals, “rule over the fish of the sea” and so on. There is no hierarchy or superiority of the male here. Instead, we see male and female as partners. Linda Belleville points out four realms in which this is the case. There is equality:

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2. God gave Adam the command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.
 3. God created Eve to be a helper for Adam.
 4. Adam exercised his leadership by naming the creature God formed out of Adam's rib “woman.”
 5. The serpent subverted God's pattern of leadership by tempting Eve rather than Adam.
 6. God approached Adam first after the first couple had sinned, even though Eve sinned first. (In Beck and Bloomberg, p, 201).

⁷The Hebrew word used here for man is “adam.” We know this word as the name of the first man. It is also used to denote the male gender or for mankind. In Genesis 1:26-27 “adam” is used to refer to mankind (See Gen 5:2). It seems that the Genesis 3:22 use carries that same meaning. In chapter 2, “adam” means “male.” There is another Hebrew word for male (ish), which is used in 2:23 in conjunction with the word for woman (isha).

⁸Unless otherwise noted, the New International Version of the Bible is used throughout.

- Of personhood – Both male and female are created in the image of God.
- In the social realm – Both male and female are commanded to exercise dominion over creation.
- In the family realm – Both male and female share joint responsibility in the bearing and rearing of children.
- In the spiritual realm – Both male and female are blessed by God.⁹

A second consideration from Genesis 1 is the concept of being created in the image of God. Another way to express this is what makes mankind different from the rest of creation? Qualities such as the ability to reason and create and the presence of the soul/spirit makes human like God. Yet something is still missing. For humans to truly reflect God there needs to be community.

When God says in verse 26, “let us make man in our image,” he is not talking to the angels who are a part of the creation. He’s having a conversation with Himself (God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit). It is as male and female, in community, that humans reflect the image of God (Grenz, 1995).

This idea is reinforced by God’s summary proclamation of His handiwork. “Man alone is ‘not good’ (Gen 2:18). Man plus woman is ‘very good’ (Gen 1:31)” (Belleville, 2000, p. 103). This thought serves as a good segue into a discussion of Genesis 2.

Genesis 2:15-25

The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat of it you will surely die." The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a help¹⁰ suitable for him."

⁹Belleville, 2000, pp. 99-100. Belleville adds this important observation. “It is this very oneness (and not propagation) that is emphasized in the teachings of Jesus and Paul. While culture emphasized the continuation of the family line, it is a curious thing that neither Jesus nor Paul mention fruitfulness when they treat the purpose of marriage. What they do mention is God’s intent that the two become one” (p. 98). See Staton, p. 24, Bruce, p. 8.

Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable help was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman, for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

The creation of woman is specifically set in motion by God to alleviate the man's loneliness. There is an old saying that is often used in weddings that speaks to this issue: woman was not made from man's head for him to lord over her, neither was she made from the feet of man so that he could trample over her. She was made from his side so they could share their life experiences together. And verse 23 "points to family propinquity, one's close relative, or, in effect, "my equal" (Kaiser, p. 6).

Staton points out the importance of the two nuances of the Hebrew word "kenegdo," which is translated as "suitable for" in the NIV. First, Adam sees Eve as his equal counterpart. In other words, this is a horizontal relationship of equality. Second, "kenegdo" points to a gender difference that emphasizes the fact that man and woman are not the same. It is in this difference where they must compliment each other. Both male and female bring something to the table. They need each other, not in the sense of subservience, but in the sense of accomplishing all that God desires for them to do (Staton, 2001).

¹⁰The NIV uses the word "helper" in its translation of the Hebrew word "ezer." This word is used 21 times in the Hebrew Bible. It is normally used of God as the source of help. It is often coupled with a word that means strength (like shield). It is best to view the woman in Gen 2:18, 20 as a help to man, i.e., a source of strength, not simply as a helper, an assistant. This is how Kaiser translates Gen 2:18, "I will make (the woman) a power (or strength) corresponding to the man" p. 6.

Belleville offers an excellent summary statement for Genesis 1-2. "If there is any subservience to be found in the creation accounts, it is not that of woman to the man but that of both the woman and the man to God. It is God who commands, and it is the man and the woman who are expected to obey" (2000, p. 103).

What is the command in Genesis 2? Not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This is important to remember as we turn to the account of the fall found in Genesis 3.

Genesis 3

The account of the fall can be divided into three sections. First, there is the sin (3:1-7). Next is the account of the consequences (3:8-24). Within the consequences section there is evidence of God's redemption (3:15) and restoration of the fellowship (3:21).

Genesis 3:1-7

Now the serpent was more crafty than any of the wild animals the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God really say, 'You must not eat from any tree in the garden'?" The woman said to the serpent, "We may eat fruit from the trees in the garden, but God did say, 'You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.' " "You will not surely die," the serpent said to the woman. "For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it. Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

One complimentary maintains that Satan knew to come after Eve because she was a woman (Strauch, 1999). Rather it seems more plausible that Satan is trying to reverse the way God planned life. God's design was for mankind to "rule over" the rest of creation and to love God and each other. Satan turned this design around so that

mankind loves the rest of creation and rules over each other (Staton, 2001).

The reason Satan came after Eve is that Adam had not trained her properly. Deception can only take place in the context of improper training.¹¹ Another important note is that Adam was with Eve the whole time. Look at verse 6 again, “She also gave some to her husband, *who was with her*, and he ate it” (emphasis added). Adam did not hold up his end of the bargain. What Eve did out of deception, Adam, it seems, did out of a complete knowledge of wrongdoing. He had every opportunity to stop the proceedings at any time but did not.

Genesis 3:8-24

Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" The man said, "The woman you put here with me—she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you." To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." Adam named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all the living. The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them. And the LORD God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of

¹¹This idea was developed by Ben Witherington III at the 2007 Strauss Lectureship. Robert Kurka agreed with this assessment in a personal conversation with the author.

life and eat, and live forever." So the LORD God banished him from the Garden of Eden to work the ground from which he had been taken. After he drove the man out, he placed on the east side of the Garden of Eden cherubim and a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life.

What are the consequences of this particular sin? First, there is a broken relationship with God. The man and woman try to hide from God (vs. 8). And, more devastating, they are expelled from the Garden/presence of God (vss. 22-24).

Second, life becomes more difficult. The woman will experience pain in childbirth and her husband "will rule over" her. This is the first time the idea of superiority is mentioned between the sexes. This is something that is not God-ordained, but is a "symptom of man's fallen nature" (Bruce, p. 8). Here's how verse 16 might sound today: "The truth is that, as a result of the fall, do not be surprised, my dear lady, if that guy just plain lords it over you" (Kaiser, p. 6). This verse is not some kind of mandate saying that man is now in charge. It is not a prescription for how life is to operate, with the male being on top. It is a consequence of sin.

Life also becomes difficult for the man since the ground is now cursed. Then, ultimately, life ends in death.

The good news is that, even in the midst of consequences, God's plan of redemption continues to operate. Genesis 3:15 is the initial promise that a Savior is coming into the world, born of a woman, to crush the tempter's head. In this act, he will do away with all the consequences of sin. The other good news is that, until that day occurs, God will continue to provide for mankind's needs (physical as well as relational 3:21).

To summarize, Genesis 1-3 supports an egalitarian view of the role of men and women. Genesis 1 shows that "man" is male and female. "Man" as male and female is

given a job to do. “Man” as male and female, in the context of community, is made in the image of God. Genesis 2 shows that woman was formed by God to be a help to man, an equal, not a subordinate. Genesis 3 shows that the man will “rule over” the woman as a by-product of their sin.

But doesn’t “the Law” say something about restricting women from teaching or leading men? That’s what many people believe Paul is talking about in 1 Corinthians 14:34. So, what does “the Law” as found in the Old Testament say? You might be surprised by the answer.

What does “the Law” have to say?¹²

¹²There is no command in the Old Testament law about women being silent in worship. In fact, women were expected to participate in worship. They were also to hear the reading of the Law. This is seen both before moving into the promised land; “Assemble the people—men, women and children, and the aliens living in your towns—so they can listen and learn to fear the LORD your God and follow carefully all the words of this law” (Deut. 31:12), and when the Israelites returned to the Promised Land after the exile; “So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand. He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law” (Neh 8:2-3). This flies in the face of the rabbinical prohibition of teaching their daughters the Law.

Specific Examples of Women Leaders in the Old Testament

Now that it has been established that there is no prohibition to women as leaders and teachers of men in the Law, it is time to look at some specific examples.¹³ There are three key ones mentioned in the Bible: Miriam, Deborah, and Huldah.

Miriam

Miriam was the oldest child of Amram and Jochebed. Her brothers were Aaron and Moses. Miriam is often remembered today as the one who watched over the baby Moses as his little ark floated down the Nile River. She is the one who told Pharaoh's daughter about a Hebrew woman who could nurse the baby.

Later in life, Miriam played a key role in the Exodus. She is called a prophetess (Ex 15:20) and leads the women in a praise song after the Israelites cross the Red Sea. As the Israelites progressed through the wilderness, Miriam and Aaron opposed Moses' marriage to a Cushite woman. God disciplined Miriam with leprosy for seven days. Miriam must have been important to the Israelites, since they waited for her (Num 12). Miriam was so important a leader that centuries later the prophet Micah wrote these words from the Lord, "I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to

¹³In addition to the three dealt with in this paper we find several others including: Hannah, the mother of Samuel, who inquired of God directly (1 Sam 1) and offered sacrifices (1 Sam 2:19); the wife of Manoah, the mother of Samson, who was used of God to tell her husband about the forth coming birth of Samson (Judg 13:2-7); and the wife of Isaiah, who is called a prophetess (Isa 8:3). Belleville points to five areas where women were actively involved with men in the public worship and celebrations of Israel:

- Building and furnishing of the Tabernacle (Exod 35:22-29)
- Playing of musical instruments in public processions (Ps 68:24-25)
- Dancing and singing at national festivals ((Judg 21:19-23)
- Dancing and singing at victory celebrations (1 Sam 19:6-7)
- Singing in the temple choir alongside of men (2 Chron 35:25; Ezra 2:65; Neh 7:67).

(Belleville, 2000, p. 45)

lead you, also Aaron and Miriam" (Micah 6:4, emphasis added).

Deborah

While Miriam shared leadership with brothers Moses and Aaron, Deborah stands on her own as the leader of Israel. Judges 4-5 tells her story, the key verses being included here.

Judges 4:4-10

Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading (or judging) Israel at that time. She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites came to her to have their disputes decided. She sent for Barak son of Abinoam from Kedesh in Naphtali and said to him, "The LORD, the God of Israel, commands you: 'Go, take with you ten thousand men of Naphtali and Zebulun and lead the way to Mount Tabor. I will lure Sisera, the commander of Jabin's army, with his chariots and his troops to the Kishon River and give him into your hands.'" Barak said to her, "If you go with me, I will go; but if you don't go with me, I won't go." "Very well," Deborah said, "I will go with you. But because of the way you are going about this, the honor will not be yours, for the LORD will hand Sisera over to a woman." So Deborah went with Barak to Kedesh, where he summoned Zebulun and Naphtali. Ten thousand men followed him, and Deborah also went with him.

Judges 4:14

Then Deborah said to Barak, "Go! This is the day the LORD has given Sisera into your hands. Has not the LORD gone ahead of you?" So Barak went down Mount Tabor, followed by ten thousand men.

Judges 5:7

Village life in Israel ceased, ceased until I, Deborah, arose, arose a mother in Israel.

The first term used of Deborah is prophetess. A prophet was one who primarily proclaimed the word of the Lord to His people in their time. The predictive element of prophecy was secondary to their role. Deborah announces God's command to Barak to go to war.

The second term used is leading (or judging). It is important to understand that Deborah is already doing this before she goes to Barak. Some have suggested that the reason Deborah was in charge was because Barak was unwilling. But the Bible makes it clear that Deborah was functioning as judge before the Barak incident. Her role as judge meant that she handled legal disputes for all of Israel, including the men. As judge, she is also the commander-in-chief of the military. She develops the battle plans for attack and gives the orders to Barak, even on the day of battle.

The third term used is mother of Israel. This title points to her spiritual leadership. This is demonstrated in her leading of Israel in worship after the victory. Barak joins in this time of praise (Grenz, 1995).

Huldah

Huldah is not as well known to the 21st century reader of the Bible as Miriam and Deborah, but she was extremely important in her day as a prophet. Her story is recorded in 2 Kings 22 and 2 Chronicles 34. The story unfolds during the eighteenth year of King Josiah's reign (he is twenty-six). The high priest, Hilkiah, discovers the book of the Law. Josiah orders him to "inquire of the Lord" about what should be done.

2 Kings 22:14-20

Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Acbor, Shaphan and Asaiah went to speak to the prophetess Huldah, who was the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. She lived in Jerusalem, in the Second District. She said to them, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Tell the man who sent you to me, 'This is what the LORD says: I am going to bring disaster on this place and its people, according to everything written in the book the king of Judah has read. Because they have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods and provoked me to anger by all the idols their hands have made, my anger will burn against this place and will not be quenched.' Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, 'This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says concerning the words you heard: Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I have spoken against

this place and its people, that they would become accursed and laid waste, and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you, declares the LORD. Therefore I will gather you to your fathers, and you will be buried in peace. Your eyes will not see all the disaster I am going to bring on this place.' " So they took her answer back to the king.

There are several items of interest here. First, why did Hilkiah deem it necessary to go to a female prophet when both Jeremiah (Jer 1:2) and Zehaniah (Zeph 1:1) were active in their prophetic ministries? Jeremiah was even close at hand in Jerusalem. Second, it goes without saying that Huldah *teaches* men of the royal court, *including the high priest, Hilkiah*. Third, Huldah declares three times, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says" (vss. 15, 16, 18). Fourth, Huldah's text for this proclamation (sermon?) comes directly from Deuteronomy 29, which means she studied the Law. Fifth, King Josiah responds to Huldah's prompting by leading the Israelites in an act of covenant renewal (Kaiser, 2005; Grenz, 1995).

Stanley Grenz offers an excellent summary to this section on specific women in leadership roles in Israel. "Scripture offers no evidence that the Israelites ever rejected a woman's leadership simply on the basis of gender. On the contrary, we get the impression that Israel acknowledged the authority of God-ordained women leaders to the same extent as their male counterparts" (Grenz, 1995, p. 67).

Even though the Old Testament is not opposed to women in leadership, by the time the first century rolls around, rabbinic teaching carried the day. That was about to change with the coming of a new order, a new creation. The Messiah was about to inaugurate a new approach to life and to women. We now turn to Jesus and his attitude of women in general and women as leaders in particular.

III. WOMEN AS LEADERS IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

When we arrive at the New Testament era, the stage is set for an interesting course about gender issues. On the one hand is the prevailing patriarchal mindset, seen in the Greco-Roman world as well as in Judaism. On the other hand is the more egalitarian approach of the Old Testament. This is emphasized in the prophecy of Joel 2:28-29:

"And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days."¹⁴

The next three sections of this paper will deal with the attitude and actions concerning women as leaders in the teaching of Jesus, the Book of Acts and Paul. Each section will deal with universal principles then provide specific examples of women as disciples and leaders.

How did Jesus view women? Did he accept them and expect them to be actively involved in leadership roles? This is where the discussion now turns.

A. WOMEN AS LEADERS IN THE ATTITUDE AND ACTIONS OF JESUS

Jesus was recognized as a rabbi, a teacher that had a following. Yet this man Jesus was like no other rabbi. He spoke as one with authority, not like other men who would continually quote other rabbis (Matt 7:28-29). This authority comes from the fact that He is God.

¹⁴It is interesting to note that even in the birth narratives of Jesus that women play an important role. Anna is referred to as a prophet. Elizabeth is filled with the Holy Spirit, just like her husband Zechariah. After four hundred years of silence in Scripture, Luke deems it necessary to show that God is ready to usher in His new era of Christ. And we see that women play as important a role as the men do.

What is important about all this is that Jesus broke from rabbinical tradition in His treatment of women. The rabbis said:

- evil would come to men who would talk much to women.
- a woman's testimony was not valid in a court of law.
- a husband could divorce his wife for just about any reason.
- for a rabbi to teach his daughter the law was lechery.

Jesus "broke" all of these rules.¹⁵ His primary purpose in doing so was not to rile His opponents but to bring back a clearer understanding of how life should be, an equal footing for all, regardless of race, status or gender.

Universal Principles

Jesus' message was for everyone to come and follow. He did not discourage women from being His disciples. Rather, He encouraged their belief in Him and condoned their acts of service to Him. In other words, He allowed them to be His disciples, something that had never been done before by Jewish rabbis. He broke with traditional practice when He allowed women to be a part of His entourage.¹⁶

Some would say, "if Jesus valued women so highly, why did He choose twelve men to be His apostles?" More than likely, Jesus was making a strong symbolic statement, identifying the new covenant movement with the old. The Twelve symbolized the twelve tribes of Israel. Staton concludes, "to exclude women from church leadership today because Jesus did not choose one to be an apostle is also to exclude any non-Jew, any slave, a single person, black person, Asian, Hispanic, and so on" (2001, p. 101).

¹⁵Jesus talked to women at length (John 4:1-42); He valued their testimony (Matt 28:1-10; Mark 16:1-11; Luke 24:1-12; John 20:1-18); Jesus honored the marital bond, recognizing that women were equally valuable (Matt 5:31-32, 19:1-12; and Jesus taught women (Luke 10:38-42).

¹⁶Witherington, 2006, pp. 15-24. Staton refers to this group as a "traveling seminary" (p. 65). See Luke 8:1-3 and the Passion Week accounts. Several women traveled with Jesus and the male disciples from Galilee to Jerusalem, a social taboo in First century Judaism.

The fact is, as a look at specific women in Jesus' ministry will show, Jesus provided women with equal opportunity for service and leadership in His kingdom work. Jesus entrusted women with the gospel message and with leadership responsibilities just as He did men. Here are some specific examples.

Specific Examples of Women in Leadership Roles in the Life and Ministry of Jesus

There are five women listed in the Gospels who are actively involved in the ministry of Jesus. Some actually teach men, one learns "at the feet" of Jesus, two show tremendous theological understanding, and one specifically fits all the criteria of an apostle.

We will start by looking at one of the first evangelists.

The Samaritan Woman

John 4:1-42

The Pharisees heard that Jesus was gaining and baptizing more disciples than John, although in fact it was not Jesus who baptized, but his disciples. When the Lord learned of this, he left Judea and went back once more to Galilee.

Now he had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Sychar, near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired as he was from the journey, sat down by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

When a Samaritan woman came to draw water, Jesus said to her, "Will you give me a drink?" (His disciples had gone into the town to buy food.)

The Samaritan woman said to him, "You are a Jew and I am a Samaritan woman. How can you ask me for a drink?" (For Jews do not associate with Samaritans.)

Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

"Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water? Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well and drank from it himself, as did also his sons and his flocks and herds?"

Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him

will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water so that I won't get thirsty and have to keep coming here to draw water."

He told her, "Go, call your husband and come back."

"I have no husband," she replied.

Jesus said to her, "You are right when you say you have no husband. The fact is, you have had five husbands, and the man you now have is not your husband.

What you have just said is quite true."

"Sir," the woman said, "I can see that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem."

Jesus declared, "Believe me, woman, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews.

Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.

God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

The woman said, "I know that Messiah" (called Christ) "is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us."

Then Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he."

Just then his disciples returned and were surprised to find him talking with a woman. But no one asked, "What do you want?" or "Why are you talking with her?"

Then, leaving her water jar, the woman went back to the town and said to the people, "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" They came out of the town and made their way toward him. Meanwhile his disciples urged him, "Rabbi, eat something."

But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you know nothing about."

Then his disciples said to each other, "Could someone have brought him food?"

"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work. Do you not say, 'Four months more and then the harvest'? I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together. Thus the saying 'One sows and another reaps' is true. 38I sent you to reap what you have not worked for. Others have done the hard work, and you have reaped the benefits of their labor."

Many of the Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I ever did." So when the Samaritans came to him, they urged him to stay with them, and he stayed two days. And because of his words many more became believers. They said to the woman, "We no longer believe just because of what you said; now we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this man really is the Savior of the world."

The first observation that pops out of this story is that Jesus should not have

talked to this woman at all. Staton lists five reasons:

- rabbis taught that if a man talks religion with a woman, he will inherit Gehenna.
- Jewish rules of propriety forbade a man to be alone with a woman who was not his wife.
- It was a disgrace for a scholar to speak with a woman on the street.
- Jews maintained strict mores against Samaritans.
- Drinking from a vessel used by a Samaritan was prohibited. (2001, pp. 72-73)

This explains the shock of the disciples (vs. 27). It has already been established that Jesus broke with custom. The important point that cannot be missed here is the action of the woman.

She understands that Jesus is the Messiah and she goes and tells her neighbors about this man who “told me everything I’ve ever done” (vs. 29). The woman did not limit her witness to the women in town. Jesus did not tell her to avoid telling the men about the truth of her testimony. Many believed because of her word about Jesus (vs 39).

Her “authority” to speak and lead men to Christ came about because of her encounter with Jesus. Women believers can, women believers must be evangelists even as men believers must be evangelists.

Mary and Martha

Mary and Martha of Bethany, along with their brother Lazarus, were close friends of Jesus. Bethany was only a couple of miles from Jerusalem. The Gospels show that Jesus was a frequent guest at their home. We are introduced to Mary and Martha in Luke 10:38-42

As Jesus and his disciples were on their way, he came to a village where a woman named Martha opened her home to him. She had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said. But Martha was distracted by all the preparations that had to be made. She came to him and asked, "Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to do the work by myself? Tell her to help me!" "Martha, Martha," the Lord answered, "you are worried and upset about many things, but only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her."

This passage is often read with the idea that Martha is more concerned about getting the job done and Mary is the more spiritual, contemplative one. Jesus praises Mary for her devotion. End of story. Or is it?

Two items of note grab's one's attention here. First, what was Mary doing invading what was considered male territory in Judaism? Her place was not with Jesus, but in the kitchen helping Martha. N.T. Wright comments, "this was probably what really bothered Martha; no doubt she was cross at being left to do all the work, but the real problem behind that was that Mary had cut clean across one of the most basic social conventions. *And Jesus declares she has the right to do so*" (2006, p. 7 emphasis is Wright's).

This breaking of the societal norm was not just a desire on Mary's part to draw closer to Jesus and to learn to be like Him. The phrase "sat at the Lord's feet" means more than having an adoring student admiring a great teacher. This same idea is used of Paul in Acts 22:3 when he sat at the feet of Gamaliel, one of the leading members of the Sanhedrin and a noted rabbi. Paul, when he was Saul, studied under Gamaliel in order to become a rabbi himself. Jesus' intent and approval of Mary's action is for her to learn "in order to share Jesus' message with others who would listen."¹⁷

One thing is for sure, while it seems that most, if not all, of the male disciples missed the point of Jesus' mission and purpose (see Matt 16:21-28, 17:4, 20:20-28), Mary "got it." Jesus had come to change the world, and a part of that plan was His death on a cross. Mary shows her understanding of this crucial point and acts accordingly. When she anointed Jesus at Bethany, she did so to prepare His body for burial. The male

¹⁷Keener, in Beck and Blomberg, 2001, p. 67. Other scholars that agree with this interpretation include Wright, 2006, p. 7; and Grenz, 1995, p. 75.

disciples grumbled but Jesus praised her (Grenz, 1995, p. 76. See Matt 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12: 1-8).

Even Martha shows a great understanding at the death of her brother, Lazarus. She proclaims that Jesus is the Son of God, prior to His death and resurrection (John 11:27). She states a belief in His ability to raise Lazarus. The belief wavers some, but she still understands what Jesus can do.

In Mary and Martha, we see two women who could grasp theological concepts, and, at least in the case of Mary, we see someone who Jesus trained to teach others.

Joanna and Mary Magdalene

Luke 8:1-3

After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The Twelve were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases: Mary (called Magdalene) from whom seven demons had come out; Joanna the wife of Cuza, the manager of Herod's household; Susanna; and many others. These women were helping to support them out of their own means.

One of the opportunities in the first century for women to make a difference in their world was in the form of patronage. Women who were well-off would sponsor various projects and benevolent undertakings. The New Testament recognized several women who benefited the cause financially and who hosted churches in their homes (See Acts 12:12, 16:14-15; Rom 16:1-2; Col 4:15).¹⁸

Luke introduces his readers to two such patrons in chapter 8, Joanna and Mary of Magdala. Three items of note stand out about all of the women mentioned in these verses. First, they are the *only* financial supporters of Jesus mentioned in the Gospels. Second, they did not simply send the money to Jesus; they traveled with Him and the

¹⁸Belleville points out that “what is surprising is that *only* women are mentioned as the financial backers of the two key movers and shakers of Christianity – Jesus and Paul” (2000, p. 24).

Twelve from place to place. Third, they even accompanied the men to Jerusalem for the Passover. It was simply unheard of in Jewish culture for a woman to travel with a man who was not a relative. It was scandalous and shocking (Belleville, 2000, Witherington, 2006).

Joanna was from the higher echelon of society. Her husband, Cuza, was the steward of Herod Antipas, ruler of Galilee and Perea. She had the means to travel without reprisal, but it is who she travels with that was a problem. Jesus referred to Antipas as a fox (Luke 13:32). These two were enemies, yet the wife of Herod's steward not only traveled with Jesus, she also probably used Herod's money, paid to Cuza, to finance Jesus' ministry.¹⁹

Even more important to the current discussion is Mary of Magdala. Mary Magdalene, like Joanna, is with Jesus early in His ministry. Jesus cast out seven demons from Mary, and, it seems, she followed him from that time on. She might have been the leading female disciple. She is a part of the entourage to Jerusalem when Jesus goes there for the last time.

Mary and other women are at the cross, they see where Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus lay the body of Jesus, and, most incredibly, Mary and some other women are the first to witness the risen Lord. Mary is mentioned in all four Gospels as the first person to see the resurrected Christ.²⁰

¹⁹Witherington, 2006. See his chapter on Joanna where he attempts to show that this Joanna is the same person as Junia mentioned in Romans 16:7. It is a possibility, but one hard to prove given the popularity of the name Junia (June) in the ancient world.

²⁰Witherington writes, "New Testament scholar C.H. Dodd once said that the story of Mary Magdalene in John 20 was the most self-authenticating of all the Easter narratives, because who would make up the notion that Jesus appeared first of all to a little-known woman from Migdal" (2006, p. 24). Remember, rabbinical Judaism did not recognize the testimony of women in a court of law. Yet all four gospel writers record Mary's part. It certainly happened this way.

Not only did Mary see Jesus, He also gave her a job to do. Keener lists three requirements for someone to be recognized as an apostle:

- Special authority that stemmed from a special commission and message.
- A ministry that typically included signs and wonders.
- A ministry that broke new ground for God’s kingdom.

(Beck and Bloomberg, 2001, p. 34)

Jesus commissioned Mary Magdalene as the first witness of His resurrection. He told her to tell the disciples to meet Him in Galilee. It is not a surprise that the male disciples did not believe the story. Nonetheless, Jesus appeared to Mary. Staton writes, “In commissioning women to be the first full Gospel messengers to men (life, death, burial, and resurrection), Jesus opened the door for Christian women to teach men and women” (2000, p. 77). Mary is described later in church history as “the apostle to the apostles” (Witherington, 2006, p. 25).

To summarize, Jesus recognized the ability of women in leadership roles among His disciples. He treated women as equals. He talked with them, He taught them, He trained them and He commissioned them to serve as evangelists, teachers, even apostles.

Would this egalitarian attitude and action continue after Jesus ascended? The quest now turns to the Book of Acts.

B. WOMEN AS LEADERS IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

Did the early church follow the lead of Jesus in her treatment of women in leadership roles? Before we look at specific examples, the need exists to look at the universal principle in Acts.

Universal Principle – Acts 2

Most church historians pinpoint the Day of Pentecost as recorded in Acts 2 as the start of the Christian church. The place to start is Acts 1 where we read about the small

group of disciples meeting in the upper room. Verses 14-15 records that there are 120 disciples, including Mary, the mother of Jesus, and other women. When the Holy Spirit comes down on the disciples, the text does not say that He only filled the male disciples. The women were there and received the gift of prophecy just like the men (Kaiser, 2005).

In his inspired speech on the Day of Pentecost, Peter quotes Joel 2:28-29 and says that what the crowds are witnessing is in fulfillment of that prophecy.

Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. These men²¹ are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: " 'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. I will show wonders in the heaven above and signs on the earth below, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and glorious day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.'" (Acts 2:14-21)

Women are proclaiming the word of the Lord (the primary function of prophecy) just like the men. Grenz is straightforward in his commentary of this extraordinary event.

Women's participation in the Pentecost event has radical and far-reaching implications. Not only did women receive Christ's commission as credible witnesses of the resurrection, but at Pentecost, they also received the Spirit's power to carry out this central community responsibility. This means that women had received the same foundational qualifications for ministry as men in the New Testament church (1995, p. 79).

Women were also actively involved in the community aspect of prayer. As the book of Acts opens, the women and men of the church are praying (1:4). Women are present at the prayer meeting for Peter (12:12-18). And the church in Philippi begins as a

²¹The word "men" is added here to "assist in translation." In other words, the translators of the NIV assumed that Peter is referring only to men. It is probable that the women were included.

result of a women's prayer meeting (16:13, Staton, 2001).

An interesting side note about the importance of women in the early church is how they were treated by the church's initial opposition, the Jewish religious leaders. In the Gospels, the female followers of Jesus are free to come and go as they please. They are at the crucifixion with no threat of reprisal. Why? They were considered harmless by the Jews.

After the church is established, persecution breaks out. The attitude of the Jews and their main henchman, Saul of Tarsus, is to arrest, imprison and even execute, *both* women and men (Acts 8:3, 22:4). In that culture, the only reason to arrest women as a part of this "subversive" group was due to their being influential leaders in that group (Wright, 2006).

Anyone who professed Christ, especially leaders of either gender, was in threat of prison or worse. Who were some of the courageous women who were willing to sacrifice everything for Jesus? It is time to look at specific women as leaders in the book of Acts.

Specific Examples of Women in Leadership Roles in the Book of Acts

Women played a key role in the life of the early church. Some hosted church gatherings in their homes. Some were prophets.²² One was influential in starting the church in Philippi. One was instructional to a traveling evangelist and theologian.

Mary, the Mother of John Mark

Mary is connected to two important figures in the New Testament. Certainly, she had a great deal of influence over John Mark. She was his mother. John Mark was a companion of Barnabas and Paul on their mission trip and the author of the gospel of

²²The four virgin daughters of Philip prophesy (Acts 21:9). Again, the primary function of a prophet is to proclaim the word of God.

Mark. She is also related somehow to Barnabas.

Mary was willing to host the church meetings in her home. We know that she was a woman of means since she had servants. Peter knew he could find a group of believers at her home when he miraculously escaped from prison. This leads one to believe that Mary's home was a regular meeting place.²³

In her role as a patron, Mary would have played certain leadership roles and maintained a measure of authority (See 1 Cor 16:15-16). Grenz points out, "there is no suggestion that the honor given to such persons was to be withheld whenever the host was a woman" (1995, p. 91).

Lydia

Another influential female patron²⁴ in the early church is Lydia. Lydia seems to have been a successful merchant. She was from Thyatira and had the means to set up shop in Philippi. She owned a home there. She more than likely owned both domestic slaves and slaves that worked in her business.

Lydia is the acknowledged leader of a Jewish women's prayer meeting. When Paul and Silas speak to the group, Lydia "and her household" become believers. She extends hospitality to Paul and her home becomes his missionary base in Philippi (Acts 16:13-16). Belleville writes, "This gesture becomes especially significant when it is

²³Acts 12:12-18. See Grenz, 1995, p. 81. It would be hard to prove, but Mary's home could possibly have been the place where the Last Supper was held and where the Holy Spirit descended on the church.

²⁴Belleville writes

Offering one's home as a meeting place involved more than cleaning the house and making the coffee. The homeowner in Greco-Roman times was in charge of any and all groups that met under their roof. This was essential, since they were legally responsible for the group's behavior (see, for example, Jason's responsibility to post bond [Acts 17:7]). In Beck and Bloomberg, 2001, p. 83.

remembered that the Philippian church is the only one from which Paul says he accepted financial support” (Phil 4:11-19; cf. 1 Cor 9:15-18 and 1 Thess 2:9; 2001, p. 24). Her home continued to serve as a meeting place for the new church (Acts 16:40).

Lydia’s leadership provided the resources for the church in Philippi to flourish. Her influence helped bring many to Christ.

Priscilla

A crucial woman in a leadership role in the early church was Priscilla. She is mentioned seven times in the book of Acts and in Paul’s letters. Granted, Priscilla is always mentioned with her husband, Aquila, but five out of the seven times she is mentioned first.²⁵ It is quite amazing that Luke and Paul would mention a woman before her husband in such a patriarchal society. Clearly, Priscilla was the lead voice in this ministry team.

Several complementarians would point out that Priscilla is under the authority of Aquila.²⁶ When one reads the text it becomes clear that Priscilla is the primary one for instructing Apollos. The apostle Paul commends Priscilla and approves of her activity in three of his letters (Rom 16:3; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19). This is an important corrective to those who hold to “the traditional interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11-12 as forbidding any woman *ever* to teach or have authority over a man!” (France, 1995, p. 80; Emphasis

²⁵France proposes that the reason Aquila is mentioned first when Luke introduces the couple is out of social correctness. Belleville supports the idea that Aquila is mentioned first since he would be the primary merchant in the family business. This author’s theory is that the two times Aquila is mentioned first is in the context of Corinth, one of the places that the role of women was a sensitive issue.

²⁶For instance, Riddle states that Priscilla instructed Apollos “alongside her husband Aquila.” He writes, “Luke affirms women as equal participants in the Christian movement and yet he also clearly affirms that certain offices . . . are limited to men only” (p. 8). But another complementarian says, “Men should be open to receiving biblical and doctrinal instruction from women. Otherwise, they are not following the humble example of Apollos, who learned from Priscilla and Aquila” (Schreiner, in Beck and Bloomberg, 2001, p. 191).

added).

Priscilla derives her authority to teach Apollos not from her husband, but from her knowledge of the word of God. Some would try to make a distinction between a private, thus “non-authoritative,” setting and a public, “authoritative” church meeting. Again, when one reads the text, this interpretation is simply not permissible. Grenz observes, “to pass by this incident as ‘unofficial guidance’ as distinct from ‘official teaching leadership’ is to draw too fine a line between authoritative and so-called un-authoritative teaching among the people of God” (1995, p. 83).

Apparently, Priscilla, a Jewish woman, was well versed in Scripture and exhibited the kind of boldness to speak “authoritatively” to a Jewish man who was well educated. She taught Apollos and he changed his teaching in accordance with the truth he found in her teaching.

Luke records that women were equally involved in ministry as men in the early church. They prayed together with men, they hosted church gatherings, they were persecuted together with men, and one is recorded as an influential teacher.

But what about that self-described Pharisee of the Pharisees, the former persecutor of the church turned Apostle to the Gentiles? What is Paul’s attitude toward women as leaders? To Paul we now go

C. WOMEN AS LEADERS IN THE ATTITUDES AND ACTIONS OF PAUL

Saul was an incredible choice to become the apostles to the Gentiles. This Pharisee was a Roman citizen with a rich background in Greek culture. And what a story of grace, turning from a zealous Jew out to destroy the church to become a leading

evangelist, teacher, preacher, and apostle of Jesus Christ.

Paul makes some interesting statements about the role of women in the church. In order to understand these statements properly, one must start with the overall picture. We must look at Paul's universal principles and specific examples of women in the ministry of Paul before we can look at 1 Corinthians 11, 1 Corinthians 14, and 1 Timothy 2.

Universal Principles

How does one determine what constitutes a universal principle? Noted New Testament scholar, F. F. Bruce, comments

Where the writings of Paul are concerned . . . a reliable rule of thumb is suggested by his passionate emphasis on freedom – true freedom by contrast with spiritual bondage on the one hand and moral license on the other. Here it is: whatever in Paul's teaching promotes true freedom is of universal and permanent validity; whatever seems to impose restrictions on true freedom has regard to local and temporary conditions (1982, p. 10).

Freedom in Christ is a recurring theme in Paul's letters. Another aspect of this freedom that is often overlooked is the freedom from the prevailing social restrictions of the day. Also, in Christ we are free to serve as the Spirit gifts the individual members of the body.

Galatians 3:26-28

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

This passage shows that everyone, regardless of ethnicity, socio-economics, or gender, has the right to become a believer in Christ. All the walls are broken down in Christ. The Jews (the men that is) uttered a prayer each morning thanking "God that he were a Jew and not a Gentile, a free man and not a slave, a man and not a woman" (Bruce, 1982, p. 9). They thought they were privileged. Verse 28 is simply stating

the fact that in Christ the perceived privilege of the Jewish male is wiped out. There is no place for such a prayer in the body of Christ (Bruce, 1982, Wright, 2006).

Some try to say that Galatians 3:28 is only about our initial entrance into Christ through baptism. That surely is a faulty assumption. Once we become believers, we are enlisted into the ministry of Jesus. We are saved to serve. The act of baptism is part of what brings us into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ but it also bestows on the believer the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). There are no restrictions of gender, race or economic status when it comes to using the gifts of God the Holy Spirit gives (Staton, 2001).

Grenz quotes Bruce's logical conclusion, "If in ordinary life existence in Christ is manifested openly in church fellowship, then, if a Gentile may exercise spiritual leadership in church as freely as a Jew or a slave as freely as a citizen, why not a woman as freely as a man?" (1995, p. 104).

Spiritual Gifts

Romans 12:1-8

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it

is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

1 Corinthians 12:27-31

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But eagerly desire the greater gifts.

Ephesians 4:7-13

But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." (What does "he ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

It could be said that spiritual gifts are the backbone of the church. The gifts are how the church fulfills her mission for Christ in the world. Each believer is given at least one gift by God the Holy Spirit (see 1 Cor 12:11). Each gift is important to

the church and is meant to build up the body of Christ and to bring glory to God.

The crucial point to our discussion is that spiritual gifts are not gender specific.²⁷ 1 Corinthians 12:28 states that God appoints people to minister. This is the closest that the New Testament comes to talking about ordination. In the Old Testament, only priests were ordained and only men were priests. Under the New Covenant, all believers are priests (1 Peter 2:5, 9) regardless of gender. God the Holy Spirit “ordains” believers with at least one gift. Leadership is a spiritual gift as is prophecy, teaching, giving and so on. If someone has been given the gift of leading, the church should let that person lead, again regardless of gender.

Bruce continues to be instructive when he writes:

If [the Holy Spirit] manifestly withheld the gifts of teaching or leadership from Christian women, then we should accept that as evidence of his will (1 Cor 12:11). But experience shows that he bestows these and other gifts, with “undistinguished regard,” on men and women alike – not on all women, of course, nor yet on all men. That being so, it is unsatisfactory to rest with a halfway house in this issue of women’s ministry, where they are allowed to pray and prophesy, but not to teach or lead (1982, pp. 10-11).

To summarize, Paul’s universal principle is freedom. This is played out in the context of the church in two ways; equality in ministry and the exercise of spiritual gifts. When the church emphasizes these two sides of the same coin, she is fulfilling God’s plan and purpose.

Within this framework of equality and spiritual gifts, Paul recognizes several women who were actively involved in ministry roles. The next section discusses some of them.

²⁷The unfortunate translation of the original Greek by the NIV leads one to think otherwise. In Romans 12:6, the word “man’s” is used. It is not in the original language. In 1 Corinthians 12:6 and Ephesians 4:8, the word “men” is used, again not in the original Greek. In the Romans 12 passage, the NIV uses the masculine pronoun, but this use is one of the many times that a masculine pronoun is used generically, i.e., meaning male and female.

Specific Examples of Women as Leaders in the Life and Ministry of Paul

Paul mentions eighteen women in his letters who are disciples of Jesus and are actively involved in ministry.²⁸ Ten of these are mentioned in Romans 16 alone. Of these eighteen women, four will be discussed in this section. One of these Paul entrusts as the letter-bearer to the Romans. Two are seen as important leaders in the church at Philippi. The last is described by Paul as an apostle.

Phoebe

Romans 16:1-2

I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant²⁹ of the church in Cenchrea. I ask you to receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints and to give her any help she may need from you, for she has been a great help to many people, including me.

Paul writes his letter to the Roman church before he has been there. He knows some of the people there, notably Priscilla and Aquila, but he has never visited the city of seven hills or the church in that metropolis. It is important to note that he sends a woman, Phoebe, to Rome as the letter-bearer.³⁰

The implication here is that Paul entrusted Phoebe, a woman, with the task of explaining Scripture (his letter) to a congregation that had men and women in it.

There is no doubt that women participated in the early church as deacons.

²⁸See Appendix A for a complete list of women in the New Testament. See pages 30-31 for the discussion on Priscilla.

²⁹“Servant” is an accurate translation of the Greek word “diakonos” but can be somewhat misleading. The NIV footnote says that “deaconess” is an alternative translation. This is inappropriate since the original word is in the masculine case. The appropriate word is “deacon.” Phoebe is a female deacon at the church in Cenchrea. Grenz points out that “this is the only New Testament occurrence of the word [diakonos] followed by a genitive construction linking a person’s service directly to a local church” (1995, p. 88).

³⁰Other examples of letter-bearers and others commended by Paul include Tychicus (Eph 6:21-22; Col 4:7-8), Titus (2 Cor 8:16-24), and Epaphroditus (Phil 2:25-30).

Phoebe is the only one that is named, but Paul also addresses the role in 1 Timothy 3:11. There are three reasons to see this verse as addressing female deacons and not wives of deacons.

- The qualities listed in verse 11 are the exact duplicates of those listed for male deacons in verse 10.
- The Greek word order of verses 8 and 11 is identical.
- Where is the corresponding admonition for elders' wives if this verse is about deacons' wives?

Euodia and Syntyche

Philippians 4:2-3

I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

The church at Philippi did not have a problem with women leaders. As noted above, Lydia was instrumental in the creation of this church. Now we see that Paul addresses Euodia and Syntyche as leaders of the church. His message to them is essentially “to bury the hatchet.”

It is important to note that Paul seldom challenges individuals by naming names in his correspondence. The problem in the Philippian church was one of disunity (2:1-18). Here he pleads with these two women to work things out. Belleville states that this “indicates that their role was so distinctly a leadership one that their disagreement put the unity of the church at jeopardy” (In Beck and Bloomberg, 2001, p. 100). The importance of this reconciliation for Paul makes one think that these women were a vital part of the leadership to whom the letter was addressed (1:2; Belleville, In Beck and Bloomberg, 2001; France, 1995).

Junia(s)

Romans 16:7

Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.

This verse is an important one to the discussion of women in leadership roles.

Three questions must be addressed. First, what is the identity and, therefore, the gender of Junia(s)? Second, what does Paul mean when he uses the phrase “among the apostles?” Third, what kind of apostle does Paul mean in this verse?

The NIV again is confusing when it translates the Greek word “Iounian” as a masculine name (Junias). This translation is unfortunate for two reasons. First, there is no evidence of a single example of the use of Junias; no inscriptions and nothing in the literature of the day. On the other hand, Junia is attested by scholars to be quite common (this list includes Bruce Metzger, the editor of the Greek New Testament; Preato, p. 3).

Second, the evidence of the Church Fathers (exegetes, preachers, and theologians in the church after the first century) understood this Iounian to be the wife of Andronicus.³¹ John Chrysostom (347-407), the bishop of Constantinople, praises Junia as a great example of someone for Christian women to emulate. He states:

To be an apostle is something great! But to be outstanding among the apostles – just think what a wonderful song of praise this is! They [Andronicus and Junia] were outstanding on the basis of their works and virtuous actions. Indeed, how great the wisdom of this woman must have been that she was deemed worthy of the title of apostle (Quoted in Preato, p. 3).

³¹Jones, a complimentarian, lists Ambrosiaster, Jerome, John Chrysostom, Theodoret of Cyrhus, Primasius, John Damascene, Haymo, Hatto, Oecumenius, Lanfranc of Pec, Bruno the Cathusian, theophylact, Peter Ablard and Peter Lombard as those who held to this view (pp. 5-6). Preato adds Origen to the list (p. 3).

If Junia is a woman, the wife of Andronicus, it fits in well in Paul's listing of another, more familiar to modern readers, couple, Priscilla and Aquila.

The second question about the phrase "among the apostles" is also an important consideration. Did Paul simply mean to say that Andronicus and Junia were "notable to the apostles or by the apostles?" If that is the case then the Greek preposition "en" would not be used in its normal way. Witherington shows that both Origen and John Chrysostom, whom he describes as the earliest Greek commentators on this verse, say that the word means "in" or "among" (2006, p. 19). Even complimentary scholar Jones states "most scholars understand the text to say that Andronicus and Iounian were themselves prominent 'apostles,' whatever that term might denote, and not just highly esteemed by the Apostles" (p. 9).³²

So, how did Paul use the term "apostle" in Romans 16:7? James Walters offers four possible ways the term is used in the New Testament.

1. The Twelve original followers of Jesus.
2. Persons who had seen the risen Lord and been commissioned by Him (1 Cor 9:1, 15:1-11).
3. A missionary successful in church planting, labor and suffering (2 Cor 11).
4. An emissary or missionary sent out by a particular church to perform specific tasks (2 Cor 8:23; Phil 2:25). (In Preato, p. 6).

Obviously, Andronicus and Junia were not a part of the Twelve. They also do not seem to be "on a mission" for a local body even though they are working in Rome at the time of Paul's writing. Either 2 or 3 are possibilities, but the important thing is that Paul commends them both as outstanding apostles (Preato, p. 6). Grenz states that even if they were sent out by a specific body "they would have engaged in authoritative preaching and teaching on behalf of the Church" (1995, p. 94).

³²Jones does not believe that "Iounian" is female. He also thinks that the way "apostle" is used by Paul is not in some kind of authoritative sense.

The biblical evidence is quite clear concerning Paul's acceptance of women in leadership roles in the church. The difficulty lies in the three passages that either imply male leadership or explicitly demands women to be silent in the church. With a great deal of humility and with a small sense of fear and trepidation, we now turn to 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy.

IV: THE PROBLEMATIC PASSAGES ABOUT WOMEN AS LEADERS

It is obvious from the preceding section that Paul valued the ministry of women. He uses the same praiseworthy terminology of women as he did of men. He points out Priscilla, Phoebe, Junia and others as exemplary in their leadership. In light of this, how does he write passages like 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, 1 Corinthians 14:26-40 and 1 Timothy 2:1-15? It seems that there are three options: either he did not write these passages (an option that is dismissed by most conservative scholars), or Paul is contradicting himself, (i.e., he does not practice what he preaches); or he is referring to a specific problem within the context of a given church situation.

1 Corinthians 11:2-16

2 I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the teachings, just as I passed them on to you. 3 Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. 4 Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. 5 And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is just as though her head were shaved. 6 If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved off, she should cover her head. 7 A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. 8 For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; 9 neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. 10 For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head.

11 In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. 12 For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God. 13 Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? 14 Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, 15 but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. 16 If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God.

The first question that arises in this passage is the meaning of the word “head.”

Some try to define the original Greek word from a modern day English understanding

where head means authority, leader, or master. Bilezikian argues convincingly that “head” in the New Testament is more about “a servant function as provider of life.” He states that verse 3 is not a hierarchy but a sequence of chronology. He proposes that verse 3 should be read with this understanding. He writes, “at creation, Christ was the giver of life to men as the source of life of Adam (‘by him all things were created’ Col 1:16). In turn, man gave life to the woman as she was taken from him. Then, God gave life to the Son as he came into the world for the incarnation” (p. 2).

It must be remembered that Christ is the only “head” of the Church in the English way of understanding the term. The biblical concept of leadership is bottom-up not top-down. In other words, it is servant oriented. And its purpose is that the body would grow to be like Christ (Staton, 2001).

Verses 4 and 5 are important to the discussion of women serving in public ministry roles. Paul explicitly states that women, as well as men, are involved in the practice of prayer and prophesy. Paul does not tell the women to be silent. He does not criticize their activity.

As will be seen in our discussion of 1 Corinthians 14, prophecy is a vocal, public and authoritative activity. The words spoken in prophecy originate with the Holy Spirit and the Church is expected to heed those words. A true prophet would in no way contradict the written word of God. God called some, women and men alike, to be prophets. The authority derives from God (France, 1995).

The main issue of this passage is to properly understand what Paul means in verse 10. Some would say that the “sign of authority” means that men have authority over women. Noted biblical scholar Walter Kaiser avers that this covering is not even a part

of the equation.³³ The more appealing explanation is that this covering is seen as a sign of the woman's own authority to prophesy. Linda Belleville writes:

First, 1 Corinthians 11:10 in its plain grammatical sense, speaks of an authority that a woman herself possesses. Second, Paul's basic concern in the passage is with the proper attire of women when they pray or prophesy in public. This makes head covering as a sign of a woman's authority (or freedom) to engage in ministry activities the better option by far. It also fits with "because of the angels." The presence of angels as maintainers of order and propriety during worship was a commonly held Jewish belief (In Beck and Bloomberg, 2001, p.105, n. 54).

The covering is a cultural concession, not a prohibition of women prophesying and not a sign of someone else's authority (Bruce, 1982).

Verses 11 and 12 serve as an interpretation of verses 8 and 9, and the headship discussion of verse 3. Even though woman was created from man, man is born of woman. The common source of both is God. This points to "a mutuality of source" and "lacks any overtones of 'authority over'" (Grenz, 1995, p. 114).

In verse 16, the original Greek does not include the word "other." If that is the case, the verse would read "If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no such practice-nor do the churches of God." Kaiser comments,

And, if anyone is unnerved over the whole matter of requiring women to wear some kind of covering, then Paul says in 1 Cor 11:16, "We have no such practice" that requires women to wear a covering. Note even here, how the translations reverse the whole meaning of the Greek text and say, as the NIV says, "We have no other practice", which infers this is the only one, and that is that women must wear a covering when they worship (2005, p. 10).

The practice of women wearing a veil or covering is not a universal principle.

³³Kaiser states:

Everywhere Paul uses the Greek word "exousia" in 1 Corinthians it means "authority" or "power." Moreover, never is it used in the passive sense, but only in the active sense (1 Cor 7:37, 8:9, 9:4-5). But in one of the weirdest twists in translation history, this one word was rendered "a veil, a symbol of authority" on her head!!" (2005, p. 6).

It seems that the NIV translates the word "exousia" that way due to the context, i.e., the discussion is about head coverings for women.

Some churches today still practice this, but it is more of a cultural thing than a divine command.

Belleville offers a good summary statement for this passage; “So, Paul takes issue not with what women are doing but with how they are doing it. Women (and men for that matter) can pray and prophesy in the church, but they must not flaunt the social conventions of the day in so doing” (2000, p. 153).

The fact that Paul condones women’s participation in worship in 1 Corinthians 11 helps shed some light on 1 Corinthians 14 where he makes the bold statement “women should remain silent in the churches.” Either Paul contradicts himself or he means something different than what some take at face value. It is time to look at 1 Corinthians 14.

1 Corinthians 14:26-40

26What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. 27If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. 28If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God.

29Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. 30And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. 31For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. 32The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. 33For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.

As in all the congregations of the saints, 34women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. 35If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

36Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? 37If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him

acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. 38If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored.

39Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. 40But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

A reading of 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35 in the NIV by itself appears to put a restriction on women speaking in the context of public worship. There are several items in the larger context of the Bible and the letter of 1 Corinthians that show that a different meaning is Paul's intent. The immediate context warrants something other than complete silence of all women. And there are specific items in verses 33b-35 that suggests another interpretation.

We have already looked at Paul's attitude and actions about women in the church. He praises women for their leadership and ministry. In the preceding section, we saw how Paul affirms women praying and prophesying in 1 Corinthians 11:5. It would make no sense for Paul to now say that women must be totally silent in public worship (Belleville, 2000).

To arrive at a proper meaning of these verses we must first look at the bigger picture in 14:26-40. First, when Paul starts his discussion on orderly worship in verse 26 he addresses the church as brothers. He uses this term often to refer to the whole church, both male and female.³⁴ Earlier, in verse 23, he talks about "the whole church" coming together. This shows that he is referring to both men and women in the context of public worship. The word "everyone" in verse 26 also points in this direction.

Paul gives three parameters for public worship. First, everyone is to participate

³⁴Paul uses the word "brothers" 97 times in his letters. 73 of these times he is referring to the individuals that make up the church. "Brothers" is a gender neutral term (i.e., it means male and female). "Brothers" is a more personal term of endearment than "church." It would be appropriate, then, to say "brothers and sisters" in these instances. One denomination, The Church of the Brethren, understand using the term "brothers" to denote the whole church.

(vs. 26a). Second, everything is “done for the strengthening of the church” (vs. 26b).

Third, everything is “done in a fitting and orderly way” (vs. 40).

The pattern of worship in the early church seems to have been much more participatory than our worship today. The main components of worship included singing (a hymn), teaching (a word of instruction), prophesying (a revelation), and speaking in tongues (with an interpretation). The key is that everyone was to participate, even during the “sermon.”

Belleville writes, “Everyone in the congregation was expected to be able to teach (Col 3:16; Heb 5:12). . . . When the church in Corinth gathered for worship, it was taken for granted that both men and women would verbally instruct one another” (In Beck and Bloomberg, 2001, p. 99). If Paul wanted to put a restriction on women’s participation it seems that he would have done so here in verse 26 (the front bracket of this section on public worship).

Paul does put some parameters on what should happen during worship, but it has more to do with whether what happens strengthens the church and whether what is done is fitting and orderly. In other words, everyone can participate, but only if it is done in a proper manner.

The first parameter is that what is done strengthens the church. Is it possible that some who wanted to speak up during the worship service were spouting false doctrine or speaking ill of a brother or sister without evidence of the accusation (i.e., gossip)? Certainly, false “brothers” (again, probably including women) tried to infiltrate the church and would be so bold as to disrupt worship in this way.

The second parameter, one that is laid out in the rest of this passage, is that

everything be done in an orderly fashion. This idea comes across specifically in verses 27-28, 32-35, and 40. Paul addresses three specific groups in this section of the letter. His concern is orderly speaking during public worship. This points to a problem of disorder in the current situation in the Corinthian church (Belleville, in Beck and Bloomberg, 2001).

France describes the problem, “[Paul] opposes the uncontrolled and self-centered indulgence in supernatural phenomena which seems to have become the norm in that over-enthusiastic church” (1995, p. 53). Staton puts it this way “emotionalism was hindering edification, confusion was hindering conciliation, and disorder was hindering discipling” (2001, p. 164).

The confusing part of this passage in the NIV is the punctuation used in verse 33, “For God is not a God of disorder, but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints, . . .”. In the original Greek manuscripts, no punctuation marks were used. Years later scholars added punctuation where they thought the context warranted them. Sometimes, though, even punctuation marks were put in places that agreed with a translator’s beliefs.

Such is the case in verse 33. Does “as in all the congregations of the saints” go with “women should remain silent in the churches” as the NIV has it? Or should it go with the preceding part of verse 33, “For God is not a God of disorder but of peace?”

If the phrase goes with the injunction about women’s silence, it becomes a universal principle prohibiting any vocalizing by women in public worship. If the phrase goes with “for God is not a God of disorder but of peace”, Paul is referring to the situation in the Corinthian church. In that case, the universal principle is “fitting and orderly worship.”

This phrase, or something very near to this phrase (as in all the congregations of the saints), is used three other times in 1 Corinthians. It is significant that Paul “appeals to universal practice . . . as a concluding point.”³⁵ It would be highly unlikely for Paul to change the format here in 14:33.

The context of 14:26-40 also makes more sense when “orderliness” is what Paul demands. This injunction speaks to all three groups in question; those who speak in tongues, those who prophesy; and those women who want to learn. Staton states correctly that “14:34-35 should not be divorced from the context of people stepping on another’s words” (2001, p. 164).

Another way these three groups are connected is that Paul uses the Greek word for silent, “*sigao*,” in his instructions for all. He puts specific parameters on each group, but does not call for total silence. For those who speak in tongues silence is warranted if there is no interpreter. For those who prophesy silence is warranted when someone else is speaking. For women who want to learn silence is warranted to avoid chaos in the assembly (Staton, 2001, pp. 169-170).

What do we know about these noisy female learners? First, they are married (“Let them ask their husbands at home”). This has nothing to say to women who were single (including widows). So, the parameter for women to be silent is not one that prohibits all women from speaking. It has already been shown that women would participate in proclamation (11:5; 14:26). “The problem seems not to be teaching, but that the women are learning – too loudly” (Keener, in Beck and Bloomberg, 2001, p. 51).

Second, even though the Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures of the day thought it

³⁵Belleville, in Beck and Bloomberg, 2001, p. 117, n. 76. The other places where this appeal is made are 1 Corinthians 4:17; 7:17; and 11:16.

unimportant for women to learn, Paul instructs this to take place in the context of the church (“if they want to inquire about something” . . .). Most of the women in the Corinthian church were probably novices in the faith and they had questions. Paul is not saying “don’t ask”, but he is saying “ask in the proper setting.”

Actually Paul places some responsibility on husbands in this matter, to help their wives mature beyond their novice understanding of Scripture and the Christian faith. This way the corporate time of worship would be one of order.

Another take on the problem in this passage is Paul’s reference to “the law.” What law is he referring to is the question. Most of the time when Paul uses the term he means the way things were done before Christ came to fulfill the law. Sometimes he refers to Old Testament injunctions that are still valid, (i.e., not ceased or changed by Christ). Occasionally he uses “law” to describe the life of sin. The NIV assumes that Paul is pleading to the Old Testament in this passage, hence the capital “L.” But, as was stated earlier, there is no specific place where this mandate is given in the Old Testament.

Kaiser states:

The problem simply put is this: nowhere in the whole Old Testament does it teach or even imply what is claimed here! No law in the entire Old Testament, much less the Torah, can be cited that a woman “must be in submission” and “remain silent” and, if she wants to know or ask about something, she “should ask [her own] husband at home.” Women spoke freely in public in both testaments (2005, pp. 9-10).

This prohibition did occur in a widely-used body of literature. It is the rabbinical teaching found in the Talmud. This appeal to “the law” is reminiscent of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. “You have heard it said,” more often than not, is referring to the interpretation of the rabbis in the Talmud, not the Old Testament. So, “you have heard it said that a woman must be in submission and remain silent,” but I say to you “let the

women learn.”

K.E. Bailey offers this as an interpretive translation of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35: “Women, please keep silent in worship and listen to the female and male prophets. Don’t interrupt them with questions and don’t talk/chat in church. If you can’t understand what is being said, ask your husbands at home” (In France, 1995, p. 55).

Belleville summarizes 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 nicely:

1. The context is that of public worship.
2. The speaking is almost certainly of a disruptive sort.
3. The source of the disruptive speaking is married women.
4. The motive for disrupting worship was “to learn.”
 - a. Paul is not addressing women who are exercising their spiritual gifts.
 - b. Paul is not speaking to women exercising a gift of discernment by judging the truthfulness of the prophetic word.
 - c. The fault was not in the asking per se but in the inappropriate setting for their questions (2000, pp. 160-161).

1 Corinthians 14:26-40 is about orderly worship. Paul’s plea for silence is not an injunction against women teaching but a request for orderly worship. Women have every right to learn, just do it in an orderly way. Paul also places an emphasis on education (“If they want to INQUIRE about something, they should ask their own husbands at home” (1 Cor 14:35a). Robert Kurka states, “the mandate that husbands were to instruct their spouses would have been a challenge to both Greco-Roman and Jewish cultures!” (2004, p. 2). Everyone is expected to participate in worship, and, in order to do so, everyone needs to be properly trained.

One more passage sounds like a prohibition against women’s involvement in leading and teaching. In fact, Paul comes right out and says women should not teach. What does he mean? It is time to look at 1 Timothy 2.

1 Timothy 2

1I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone— 2for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 3This is good, and pleases God our Savior, 4who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. 5For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time. 7And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles.

8I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing. 9I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, 10but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God.

11A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. 12I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. 13For Adam was formed first, then Eve. 14And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. 15But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

The one place in all of Scripture where women are forbidden to teach men is found in 1 Timothy 2:12. Is this statement by Paul a universal principle, meant for all time and for all churches to follow, or is it in response to a problem in the local church in Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3)? There are several questions about Paul's meaning in 2:11-15, but first a look at the context of 1 Timothy is in order.

Paul's primary concern in 1 Timothy is not church leadership or worship, although these are important issues in the letter. His primary concern has to do with the teaching of the church. On the one hand, he condemns false teaching. On the other hand, he commends true teaching.³⁶

The church in Ephesus as portrayed by Paul in this pastoral letter to his protégé,

³⁶Appendix B breaks down 1 Timothy into sections showing Paul's warnings of false teaching, his exhortation to true teaching, and his exhortation to pure living which goes hand in hand with true teaching.

Timothy, is frankly, a pastoral nightmare. Belleville lists these issues:

- False teachers who need to be silenced (1:3-7, 18-20; 4:1-8; 5:20-22; 6:3-10, 20-21).
- Elders need to be publicly rebuked (5:20).
- The men of the congregation are angry and quarrelsome (2:8).
- The women are dressing immodestly (2:9).
- Some young widows have turned away from the faith to follow Satan (5:15).
- The rich have become arrogant and are putting their hope in wealth (6:17).
- Some in the church have turned to godless chatter and controversies and in so doing have wandered from the faith (6:20-21).
- Two leaders of the church have been expelled (1:20).

(2003, p. 168).

Notice that the overriding issue is false teaching which contributes greatly to the instigation of the other issues.

How does a pastor deal with these issues? Paul's advice is to counter false teaching and its consequences with true teaching that will produce righteous living. The importance of sound teaching is shown in several places in 1 Timothy (1:10-11; 3:2; 4:6, 11, 13, 16; 5:17; 6:1-3). The main issue throughout the letter is that sound doctrine be presented in the church by those who are properly trained in the "glorious gospel of the blessed God" (1:11). And, as Witherington points out, "the correction of an abuse of a privilege, such as the privilege of speaking (for example, praying or teaching) in worship, is not the same as ruling out the privilege altogether" (2006, p. 211).

It is against the backdrop of the contentious issues that Paul approaches a discussion on worship. Paul places a major emphasis on maintaining an attitude of peace (as opposed to disputing) in the life of the church. The word translated "peaceful" in 2:2 in the NIV is the Greek word "hesychia." (This is also the Greek word used in verse 12, which the NIV unfortunately translates as "silent"). The idea of peaceful behavior is emphasized four times in chapter 2:

- Prayers for secular governing authorities are urged “that we may live peaceful and quiet lives” (2:2).
- The men of the church are enjoined to lift up hands in prayer, without anger or disputing (2:8).
- The women are commanded to behave properly (2:9) and quietly (2:12).
- The women are to learn in a peaceful (not quarrelsome) fashion (2:11).

(Belleville, in Beck and Bloomberg, 2001, p. 121).

Here, as in 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Corinthians 14, the setting Paul is writing about is public worship. His concern here, as in 1 Corinthians 14, is people disrupting worship in some manner. Notice that it is not only the women who are causing the problem.

First, in verse 8, there is an admonition for men to pray “without anger or disputing.” Paul is requiring men who pray in worship to do so with a proper attitude. Kaiser says, “[Paul] wanted men to beware of leading outwardly in prayer while inwardly harboring hostility over some dispute or hidden anger” (2005, p. 8).³⁷

The possibility exists that the men were specifically angry and disputing with some of the women in the Ephesian church who were attempting to “lord it over” them. The scenario goes like this; some of the women in the church in Ephesus could have come out of the cult of the Greek goddess, Artemis. This was a female-dominated cult where women were in charge. Some of these women might have brought that mentality into the church, trying to continue the practice. This would cause friction with the men, developing into anger and disputing (Belleville, 2003).

Even more probable is that Paul is addressing women of high society. They have some means as evidenced by their fancy hairdos, shiny jewelry, and the latest fashions. These women held rank within the community of Ephesus, just like in other cosmopolitan

³⁷See France, p. 62 and Wright, p. 9.

cities in the Greco-Roman world. When they became Christians, “such people would expect to lead and to be spokespersons in the new community [the church]. They would not be inclined to be quiet and listen and learn, but that is precisely what Paul says must happen at this point” (Witherington, 2006, p. 218).³⁸ In either scenario, it is likely that the men would be upset about women trying to “take over.”

Next, Paul addresses the women. Notice, he does not issue his statement about women teaching men until verse 12. First, he deals with proper attire for worship in public leadership roles. We see that women are involved in public prayers as are the men. The initial Greek word in verse 9 “hosantos,” means “in like manner.” Kaiser explains:

The NIV and other versions tend to drop out or to soften this linking word (NIV I also want . . . – just “also”??). The apostle wants the women to do something similar to what he had just instructed the men to do, viz., to pray in public. I say “in public” because it is prayer with a “lifting up of holy hands” or outstretched as is common when publicly blessing God’s people (p. 8).

The difference comes in how each gender is to participate in the practice of public prayer. For the men it is an attitude problem. For the women it is an attire problem. The idea for the women is not to flaunt one’s wealth or physical beauty since it becomes a distraction from worship.

If the apostle Paul were to visit some of our churches today, he would not have a problem with women leading in prayer. But he would have issues with the way some people dress. Anything that draws peoples’ minds away from worship of God, “short dresses, low necklines, tight pants” (Belleville, 2000, p. 65) should be restricted. The point is that Paul envisions “women praying as well, and he wishes them to do so with

³⁸See Witherington’s discussion on women of high status, (2006, pp. 218-221), where he shows inscription evidence of women holding leadership roles in the community.

the same decorum or holiness required of men” (Witherington, 2006, p. 221).

Witherington provides a possible scenario; “One needs to envision the scene in an evening Christian worship meeting in a relatively small space with many lamps lit. In this situation, hairstyles featuring reflective items such as gold or pearls would be a regular distraction from the proper focus of worship” (2006, p.225).

And now we arrive at the verses which are at the center of the role of women in the life of the church. Several questions need to be raised when discussing 1 Timothy 2:11-15.³⁹

1). In verses 11-12, does Paul command a woman to learn in silence⁴⁰ (i.e., she is not to speak out in public) or to learn quietly (i.e., she is not to disrupt worship)?

First, in light of verse 8-10, where Paul states that women will pray “in like manner” as men, it seems that Paul wants quietness in worship; that is, no disruptions or distractions.

Second, learning quietly is more consistent with Paul’s commendations of women speaking and leading elsewhere (such as Priscilla, Phoebe, Junia and others). Along with this idea is Keener’s assertion that “if we do not read 1 Timothy 2 into the earlier texts, whose original readers had no access to Paul’s first letter to Timothy, we have no reason to doubt that Paul accepts women in ministry” (In Beck and Bloomberg, 2001, p. 40).

Third, remember that the Greek word “hesychia,” translated in the NIV in verse

³⁹The questions discussed here are just a few of the questions that Linda Belleville poses in her book *Women Leaders and the Church: Three Crucial Questions*, pp. 164-165.

⁴⁰Lantzer quotes Virginia Hedges, the state organizer and lecturer for the Christian Women Board of Missions in Missouri in 1892-93 (a Restoration Movement organization). The issue is the ordination of women into pastoral ministry: “Strange that the literal interpreters and legalists have not recalled the women missionaries and forbidden women teaching and stopped the work of more than one-half of the communicants of the churches, not forgetting the chief soprano of the church choir (who does anything but heed Paul’s injunction of silence)” (1990, p. 43).

12 as “silent,” is always translated elsewhere as peaceful or quietly. There is no good reason to change that translation here.

Fourth, the only command in this passage is “let the women learn” not “women must be silent.” “Let the women learn (‘manthano’)” was a radical concept in that culture. Jesus had begun this new trend in his ministry (the Samaritan woman, Mary of Bethany). Paul continues this counter-cultural expectation. Several scholars (Kaiser, Wright, Grenz, Staton, Belleville, France, Witherington, Kurka) agree that the issue here is a command to learn. This command has two groups in mind.

First, there are the men of the church who, from a cultural perspective, would have thought that teaching women was avant-garde and inappropriate. Grenz says:

In issuing the command, Paul chooses a word (“manthano”) that encompasses learning through practical experience (1 Tim 5:4), or, as in this case, through more formal instruction (2 Tim 3:7, 10-17). The term likewise includes learning through inquiry, and even refers to study like that of a rabbinical school (as in John 7:15)” (1995,).

Women were not trained as rabbis nor did they have time to learn for the most part. This was a radical teaching for that day.

The second group consists of the women of the church who are attempting to teach without proper instruction. Paul’s concern is that teachers, in this case female teachers, are doctrinally sound in their teaching. France comments that, “Paul wants them [the women] to learn. Until they have done so, they are clearly not in a position to teach, but will come into the category of ignorant teachers condemned in 1:7” (1995, p. 61). In other words, “those who must not teach (vs. 12) are those who have yet to learn (vs. 11)” (France, 1995, p. 64).

2). To whom or what is she to be in “full submission”?

Women are to learn in quietness and full submission. Quietness (*hesychia*) has been discussed. Again, this is not a command for silence but has more to do with a quiet, receptive, teachable spirit. Submission, or better yet, submissively, also points to the attitude of those who learn.

First, remember that “to submit” is different than “to obey.” “Submission is a voluntary act of deferring to the wishes of an equal. Obedience is following the wishes of a superior” (Belleville, 2000, pp. 171-172). Wright states that this phrase “is often taken to mean ‘to the men’ or ‘to their husbands,’ but it is equally likely that it refers to their attitude, as learners, of submission to God or to the gospel – which of course would be the same attitude required of male learners” (2006, p. 9).

Kaiser adds “teacher” as a possibility to whom the learning women should submit (see 1 Cor 16:16; Heb 13:17, 2005, p. 8). Belleville adds the idea of self-control, “a calm, submissive spirit was a necessary prerequisite for learning back then (as now too)” (2003, p. 4).

Here is a proposed translation of verse 11: “a woman must (carries more force as a command then does the NIV’s “should”) learn quietly and submissively (‘both phrases describe how a woman is to learn,” (Belleville, 2000, p. 172. See also Witherington, 2006, p. 226).

3). Is the verb in verse 12 to be translated “I am not permitting” (i.e., a temporary restriction) or “I do not permit” (i.e., a habitual practice)?

Remember, the issue in 1 Timothy is avoiding false doctrine in the church. The way to prevent that from happening is through the presentation of sound doctrine. Paul

does not make women not teaching men a universal principle here, Rather, as Grenz points out, “Paul temporarily bars women from teaching in keeping with the close connection he makes between possessing wisdom or knowledge and being actively involved in the teaching and admonishing role in the church” (1995, p. 130). What’s more, Witherington points out that the verb “epitrepo” is present continual tense, a tense which is always used to denote a temporary, specific prohibition (2006, pp. 226-227).

This restriction is a temporary one which will be lifted when women are properly instructed in sound doctrine.⁴¹

4). Does verse 12 prohibit one action (“to teach a man in an authoritarian or domineering fashion”) or two actions (to teach” and “to have authority over a man”)? A corresponding question is what is the meaning of “authentein” in verse 12? Does it mean “to have authority over” or “to dominate”?

“Authentein” is used only once in the Greek New Testament. If Paul meant “authority over” why didn’t he use the more common word for authority here (exousia)? The earliest versions of this word in antiquity suggest that this verb is implying that the women in the Ephesian church were ‘brutalizing’ the men. Kenneth Bailey offers a paraphrase which reads “I do not allow these ignorant women to batter the men. They are to stop shouting and calm down” (France, 1995, p. 66).

Belleville shows that the earliest translations consistently use the term “to dominate” for the word “authentein.” She writes “earlier translations were not so quick to do so (i.e., translate ‘authentein’ as ‘to exercise authority over’). This was largely owing to dependence on ancient Greek lexicographers and grammarians (2003, p. 4).

⁴¹Sound doctrine is an imperative that all who desire to teach in the church should heed. Women teachers and men teachers should be well-versed in Scripture; reading it, understanding what God is trying to say, implementing its words into life.

Probably the best modern translation of this verse comes from *The Message*. “I don’t let women take over and tell the men what to do.” Wright offers this translation, “I don’t mean to imply that I’m now setting up women as the new authority over men in the same way that previously men held authority over women” (2006, p. 9).

Why?, because “the authority” in the church is Jesus Christ. His authority comes to the church through His word. This authority is given to those in the church who humbly submit to His calling on their lives. This calling comes from spiritual giftedness (which we have seen is gender neutral).

Belleville provides another reason that the statement in verse 12 is a local matter. A close look shows that his instructions are quite specific to the Ephesian situation:

- There is no “as in all the churches” (see 1 Cor 7:17; 11:16).
- There is no “this is what I teach in every church” (1 Cor 4:17).
- There is no “I received from the Lord what I now pass on to you (1 Cor 11:23; 15:3; cf. 1 Cor 11:2; Phil 4:9; 2 Thess 2:15; 3:6; 2 Tim 2:2).
- There are no phrases of apostolic authority, such as “by the word of the Lord” (1 Thess 4:15 NRSV; cf. 1 Cor 7:10), or “in the name of [or, through] our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor 1:10; 5:4; 2 Thess 3:6; cf. 1 Thess 4:2; 2 Thess 3:12).
- There is no “I want you to know” or “I do not want you to be ignorant” – the way Paul introduces new information of an abiding sort (e.g., Rom 11:25; 1 Cor 10:1; 11:3; 12:1; 15:1; Gal 1:11; 2 Thess 4:13). (2000, p. 170).

She also argues that verses 8-10, that is, men praying with raised hands and women using gold-braided hairstyles, are cultural phenomena. Why the shift in hermeneutics when one arrives at verses 11-12? In other words, why would Paul go from cultural considerations to a universal principle in the same context? The obvious answer is that he wouldn’t.

Kaiser points to the practical situation in the rest of the New Testament. If verse 12 is an absolute prohibition of women teaching, no exceptions to the rule, then “why does Paul instruct women to teach other women in Titus 2:4? Should he not also have

silenced Priscilla?” (2005, p. 8). We could add others like Phoebe and Junia to that list.

The best way to see verse 12 is that Paul is prohibiting one act and that is women teaching with the intent to dominate men.

5). Is “Adam was created first” a historical observation or a statement about rank? In other words, do men have the right, responsibility, and privilege to lead because Adam was created first?

To put it simply, NO! Throughout Paul’s writings and in the rest of the New Testament, “first-then” language simply defines a sequence of events. As Belleville points out, “first-then” constructions never imply “either ontological or functional priority” (2003, p. 8).

In fact, Adam carries a larger load of the blame for Eve’s deception.

. . . only Adam received the initial prohibition to avoid eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Nothing whatsoever is said about God instructing Eve at this juncture: indeed, she had not been created yet. One is left to assume that it was Adam who told Eve about the prohibition, and apparently he did not do a very clear of good job of it (Witherington, 2006, p. 228).

Remember, in Genesis 3 Adam was there the whole time. Why did he not intervene anywhere in the conversation between Eve and the Serpent? Adam was the one who “knew what he was doing, and that it was wrong, and went ahead anyway” (Wright, 2005, p. 10). As Witherington points out, “nothing is said here about the woman being more susceptible by nature to deception” (2006, p. 229).

Either gender is susceptible to deception if they have not been properly taught. Paul uses Eve as an example of one who was deceived in this passage but also in 2 Corinthians 11:3. “But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to

Christ.” This statement is made to all in the Corinthian church, both male and female.

The only way deception happens is if someone is not properly trained in the truth (see Kaiser, 2005, p. 9 and Witherington, 2006, pp. 229-231). Eve was deceived because of inadequate instruction. Many of the women in Ephesus were “trying to assume the mantle of teaching before they have learned the apostolic message properly, and in all likelihood after they have already been misled by false teachers” (Witherington, 2006, p. 231).

To summarize, Paul’s concern in 1 Timothy 2⁴² is proper instruction and orderly worship. His desire is that anyone who teaches be qualified to do so and orders instruction (learning) before allowing a person to teach. Kaiser puts it succinctly with this comment on verses 11-14; “according to Paul, the two reasons women should not teach are: (1) they have not as yet had a chance to be taught, and (2) they can all too easily be tricked and deceived when they have not yet been taught” (2005, p. 9).

So, women **can** teach men as long as they are trained in the message of Scripture and teach in such a way as to not “lord it over” men. This leads to one final question to consider, can women serve as elders? Let’s see what the Bible has to say.

⁴²¹ Timothy 2 ends with a very confusing verse in the NIV: “But women will be saved through childbearing – if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.” The problem here is the phrase “but women will be saved through childbearing.” First, the Greek text says “but she will be saved through the childbirth.” Second, salvation is only by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Is this verse contradicting the clear message of Scripture? Witherington explains:

More weight should rather be given to the presence in the Greek text of the definite article “the” before the word “childbearing” (tes teknogonias). One must ask, “which particular childbearing is meant? especially since the verb is in the singular (“she will be saved”), and surely the answer is “Jesus, born of woman, born under the law” (as Gal 4:4 puts it). In other words, the curse of woman incurred in Eve is reversed through Mary. Human fallenness came through a woman, and so did human salvation. This was the view of many of the church fathers about this verse, not least because they recognized that the Pastorals elsewhere had strongly insisted that salvation was by grace through faith, not by producing offspring while maintaining a highly moral lifestyle! (2006, pp. 229-230).

V. CAN WOMEN BE ELDERS?

The question arises about women being elders in the church. Some egalitarians would say no. This author and other egalitarians, like Robert Kurka, Knofel Staton and Linda Belleville, who would say yes, if they meet the qualifications of character listed in the text. Here is why the current author says yes.

First, the examples already listed of women in ministry gives specifics of women in the ministry roles of deacon (Phoebe), teacher (Priscilla), prophet (Anna and Philip's four daughters), evangelist/preacher (the Samaritan woman at the well), and even apostle (Junia and Mary Magdalene). Granted, there are no women named as an elder in the New Testament, but there are no men named as elders either (except when Peter and John refer to themselves as elders in their letters 1 Pet 5:1; 2 Jn 1:1; 3 Jn 1:1).

Second, the terms used of the role in the New Testament; elder, overseer, and shepherd; do not preclude women being elders. The phrase "the husband of but one wife" in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 does not say that women cannot be elders. What it says is this, if a married man wants to be an elder/overseer he needs to be faithful to his wife.

Keener writes:

To be sure, we know that most elders were male (1 Tim 3:2), but this appears to be the text's assumption (reflecting a given cultural situation) rather than its exhortation. Paul may have been specifying marital fidelity in language applicable to the majority of elders in his day. Again, it is doubtful that ancient readers would have considered Paul himself literally the husband of one wife (or a "one-woman man"), but as a church leader he fit the basic sense of the requirement because he was not unfaithful to a wife.

(In Beck and Bloomberg, 2001, p. 43).

The phrase "the husband of but one wife" is not a direct prohibition of women elders. A prohibition in the New Testament, a "thus sayeth the Lord, cannot be found.

To say that the phrase is a prohibition is an argument from silence (Staton, 2001, p. 233).

Grenz points out that “persons who would bar women from the eldership on biblical grounds must develop their case from inferences” (1995, p. 90).

Why does Paul single out male leadership (both elders and deacons) with the phrase “the husband of one wife” but not the female deacons? The best possibility is that being true to one’s wife in the Greco-Roman world was a challenge. The women were much more likely to remain faithful. Imagine what it would have done to the Christian witness to have married male leaders living do differently than the rest of the world (Belleville, 2000, pp. 142-143).

Third, the primary function of elders in the church points to two general roles, guarding the faith against false teaching and caring for the flock. Staton makes a strong case that the primary role was as relational care-givers to people in need, something that both genders can do (2001, p. 235). The overseer/elder task is essentially a pastoral one. Look at Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:2. Paul lays the responsibility of selecting the individuals who serve in this capacity in the hands of the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:28). Peter reminds these individuals that Christ’s example is the one to follow (1 Pet 2:25, Belleville, 2000, p. 141). This seems to be the reason that the qualifications of elders/overseers have more to do with character than ability.

Fourth, there is a strong possibility that “widows” was an official leadership role in the early church with similar qualifications as male elders/overseers.

1 Timothy 5:9-10

No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband, and is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds.

First, there is an age requirement to be put on the list (60 years or older). The

primary meaning of the Greek word “presbyteros” is “elderly.” Elders in Judaism (a civic role) were chosen because they “were considered wise by virtue of their age” (Belleville, 2001, p. 102).

Second, Paul gives similar qualifications. Notice the similarity between widows (1 Timothy 5:9-10) and elders (Titus 1:6, 8).

WIDOWS	ELDERS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The wife of one husband • Bringing up children <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o • Well-known for her good deeds • Showing hospitality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the husband of but one wife whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild. one who loves what is good he must be hospitable

Third, like an elder, a widow is to be paid for her ministry. The word “timao” means “to reward” or “to pay,” not “proper recognition” as in the NIV.

Belleville summarizes her discussion of widows with this statement. “It was the widow who was content to remain a widow who would serve the church with the kind of single-minded devotion that effective ministry in the first century required” (In Beck and Bloomberg, p. 103).

There is no word in the bible, yea or nay, when it comes to women serving as elders in the church. If a person is a mature believer, meets the character qualifications, is willing to serve, and is able to defend the faith, that person should be approved for this leadership role. The New Testament always talks about a plurality of elders so no one person, male or female, should “have all the power.” And even the “power” or “authority” of the elders is one that is given to them by Christ, the ultimate authority.

If you have reached this point of this treatise you may have come away thinking, “I still don’t think that women should be in leadership roles, especially elders,” that’s

okay. You are entitled to your opinion, but hopefully now it is based on more than personal preference. Hopefully you have taken up the challenge to study the Bible closer to make your decision. Do not let the fact that we disagree cause division between us or in the church.

If the arguments in this paper have convinced you to view the role of women differently, or have solidified your thinking as an egalitarian, than this author's intent has been achieved. Hopefully you are asking the question, "so what?" We have just finished reading this somewhat lengthy paper, we are convinced that women should have equal opportunity to serve, so what do we do about it in the church? This work will come to a close by addressing the "so what" question.

CHAPTER VI: “SO WHAT . . .?”

The “so what” question and chapter serves two purposes. It is an attempt by an author to bring the matter to a practical application and conclusion. It seems that the best way to bring the ending is to ask another question, “what if? . . .”

What if women did not serve in leadership capacities of any kind at Roxbury Road. What would happen, for instance, to the Alpha ministry and all of those who have come to Christ because of it? What would happen to the worship ministry if three-fourths of the worship leaders were not able to use their God-given talent (ability) and their spiritual gift? What would happen to the benevolent and missions ministries of the church? What would happen to the educational ministry of the church?

Allow me to become very personal for just a moment. In my growing up years at Roxbury I had several Sunday School teachers. All of them were women up to high school except one. I owe a great deal of gratitude to these women who guided me in life and to one in particular who told our junior high class to be like the Bereans who studied the Scriptures to see if what is being taught is according to God’s Word. That was the spark that propelled me into a deep desire to learn the things of God and to teach them to others.

Here are some practical proposals that come from this study.

- We might want to consider using a different translation of the bible or at least be willing to do the work necessary to see how accurate the current popular version (NIV) is in its translation. It was disappointing to discover how many times words like “man” and “men” were added to “aid in translation” or were “not in the Greek.”
- We certainly need to study all of what the Bible says about any subject before we come to any conclusions. This paper has been an attempt to come to the whole counsel of God on the role of women in the church. But this approach is necessary for all important issues.
- We certainly need to study Scripture in context, both the biblical context, that is, not ripping a verse or two out of its place in the bible in an attempt to make it say what

we want it to say; and the cultural context, that is, what was the author trying to say to the original audience.

- We should continue to study the role of women in the church. A good way to do this would be to provide a class that allows for open discussion and further digging on a biblical theology of women in leadership.
- We should recognize the contributions of women and men servants in the church and equally empower “the priesthood of all believers” to do the ministry for which God has called the church.
- This opens the way for women to preach, teach and lead in every capacity that men do, providing that proper training and godly character exist in men as well as in women.

Remember, the church is all about servant leadership. Women and men are called and gifted by God the Holy Spirit to guard the faith and to care for others. In other words, we are called to be like Jesus. We need to be more open to women in leadership roles. Unfortunately, “we sometimes tolerate male predominance just because ‘we’ve always done it that way’ rather than because we are convinced that the Bible requires us to conduct ourselves in such a manner” (Beck and Bloomberg, 2001, p. 323).

We must keep in mind that this issue has the potential of being a divisive one. That is why it is important to base what we say and do on the Word of God. We must pledge to stay together, agree to disagree, for the glory of God.

APPENDIX A: WOMEN IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

OLD TESTAMENT WOMEN MENTIONED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

1. Tamar – Matthew 1
2. Rahab – Matthew 1, Hebrews 11:31
3. Ruth – Matthew 1
4. Bathsheba – Matthew 1
5. The widow of Zarephath – Luke 4:26
6. Pharaoh's daughter (Moses adoptive mother) – Acts 7:21, Hebrews 11:24
7. Eve – 2 Corinthians 11:3, 1 Timothy 2:13-14
8. Hagar – Galatians 4:21-31
9. Sarah – Galatians 4:21-31, Hebrews 11:11, 1 Peter 3:6
10. Moses' parents (Amram & Jochebed) Hebrews 11:23
11. Jezebel An allusion to the wicked queen of Israel, it was a name given to a woman in the church at Thyatira – Revelation 2:20

FEMALE RELATIVES OF JESUS

1. Mary the mother of Jesus (often in the Gospels and the book of Acts)
2. Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist (a cousin of Mary) Luke 1&2
3. Mary's sister, Jesus' aunt (not named) John 19:25-27
4. Jesus' sisters (not named) Matthew 13:58

WOMEN HEALED BY JESUS OR HIS DISCIPLES (OR WHO HAD SOMEONE HEALED)

1. Peter's (Simon's) mother-in-law Matthew 8:14-15; Mark 1:30-31; Luke 4:38-39
2. Jairus' 12 year old daughter Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56
3. A woman's bleeding stops after 12 years Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:21-43; Luke 8:40-56
4. A Canaanite/Syrophenician woman's daughter Matthew 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30
5. A crippled woman healed after 18 years Luke 13:10-17
6. Dorcas/Tabitha raised from the dead by Peter Acts 9:36-41
7. Slave girl healed of demon possession by Paul Acts 16:16-21

EVIL WOMEN

1. Herodias, wife of King Herod Matthew 14:1-12; Mark 6:14-29; Luke 3:19
2. Salome, daughter of Herodias Matthew 14:1-12; Mark 6:14-29
3. Sapphira, wife of Ananias Acts 5:1-11
4. "Jezebel" Revelation 2:20

NEUTRAL WOMEN

1. Pilate's wife Matthew 27:19
2. Two servant girls at the house of Caiaphas Matthew 26:69-75, Mark 14:66-72, Luke 22:54-57, John 18:15-19
3. A woman who cries out, "Blessed is the mother . . ." Luke 11:27
4. Daughters of Jerusalem Luke 23:28
5. The mother of the man born blind John 9:18-23
6. Candace, Queen of Ethiopia Acts 8:27
7. The widows of Joppa Acts 9:36-41
8. Drusilla, wife of Felix the Roman Procurator. A Jewess Acts 24:24
9. Bernice, wife of King Agrippa Acts 25:13, 23; 26:30

WIDOWS

1. The widow of Zarephath Luke 4:26
2. The widow and her mites Mark 12:42-43, Luke 21:2-3
3. Anna, the prophetess Luke 2:36-38
4. The widow of Nain Luke 7:11-15
5. The widows of Joppa Acts 9:36-41

WOMEN DISCIPLES OF JESUS

1. Mary, his mother
2. Mother of James & John, the wife of Zebedee Matthew 20:20-28, 27:56
3. Mary, sister of Lazarus Luke 10:38-42, John 11:1-45; 12:1-11 (possibly the woman at Simon the Leper's house (Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:1-11))
4. Martha, sister of Lazarus Luke 10:38-42, John 11:1-45; 12:1-11
5. Mary Magdalene Matthew 27:55-61, 28:1-10; Mark 15:40-47, 16:1-11; Luke 8:1-3, 24:1-12; John 19:25, 20:1-18
6. Joanna, wife of Cuza, Herod's steward Luke 8:1-3, 24:1-12
7. Mary, the mother of James the younger and Joses Matthew 27:55-61, 28:1-10; Mark 15:40-47, 16:1-8;
8. Mary, the wife of Clopas John 19:25
9. Susanna Luke 8:1-3
10. Samaritan Woman at the well John 4:4-26
11. Salome Mark 15:40-41, 16:1-8
12. The "sinful" woman at Simon the Pharisee's house Luke 7:36-50
13. Many unnamed women who traveled from Galilee to Jerusalem Luke 8:1-3
14. Tabitha/Dorcas Acts 9:36-41
15. Rhoda, servant girl of Mary, mother of John Mark Acts 12:12-15
16. Mary, mother of John Mark Acts 12:12-15
17. Eunice, mother of Timothy Acts 16:1; 2 Timothy 1:5

18. Lois, grandmother of Timothy 2 Timothy 1:5
19. Lydia, dealer in purple cloth from Thyatira living in Philippi Acts 16:11-15
20. Damaris became a believer in Athens Acts 17:34
21. Priscilla, wife of Aquila. They were Jews from Rome. Met Paul in Corinth. Tent makers. Acts 18:2, 18-19, 24-28; Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19 Priscilla is named seven times in the New Testament. Five times before her husband, two times after. The two times after are in relation to Corinth.
- 22-25. Philip's four unmarried daughters who were prophetesses. Acts 21:8-9
26. Phoebe A deacon/servant in the church in Cenchrea. The letter bearer to the Roman church. Romans 16:1-2
27. Mary Romans 16:6
28. Junia, paired with Andronicus (probably married). Paul refers to them as "my relatives." They spent time in prison with Paul. They were outstanding among the apostles. They were in Christ before Paul. Romans 16:7
29. Tryphena
30. Tryphosa women who worked hard in the Lord Romans 16:12
31. Persis Paul's good friend who worked very hard in the Lord Romans 16:12
32. The mother of Rufus who had been a mother to Paul Romans 16:13
33. Julia Romans 16:15
34. The sister of Nereus Romans 16:15
35. Chloe 1 Corinthians 1:10
36. Euodia Philippians 4:2-3
37. Syntyche women who have contended at Paul's side for the cause of the gospel.
38. Nympha and the church in her house Colossians 4:15
39. Claudia 2 Timothy 4:21
40. Apphia Paul calls her "our sister," possibly related to Philemon and/or Archippus Philemon 1:2

APPENDIX B: 1 TIMOTHY

Command

Sound Doctrine

Sound Character

False Doctrine/Character

GOD

1 Timothy

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the command of God our Savior and of Christ Jesus our hope, to Timothy my true son in the faith:

Grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer, nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work—which is by faith. The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith. Some have wandered away from these and turned to meaningless talk. They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.

We know that the law is good if one uses it properly. We also know that law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious; for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for adulterers and perverts, for slave traders and liars and perjurers—and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which he entrusted to me.

I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor, and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. But for that very reason, I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited

patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Timothy, my son, I give you this instruction in keeping with the prophecies once made about you, so that by following them you may fight the good fight, holding on to faith and a good conscience. Some have rejected these and so have shipwrecked their faith. Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander, whom I have handed over to Satan to be taught not to blaspheme.

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone—for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time. And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles.

I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing. I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women (she) will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

Servants, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as servants.

In the same way, their wives (deaconesses) are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything.

A servant must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

Although I hope to come to you soon, I am writing you these instructions so that, if I am delayed, you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of the truth.

Beyond all question, the mystery of godliness is great:

He appeared in a body, was vindicated by the Spirit,

was seen by angels,

was preached among the nations,

was believed on in the world,

was taken up in glory.

The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron. They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth. For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.

If you point these things out to the brothers, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, brought up in the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed. Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives' tales; rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance (and for this we labor and strive), that we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, and especially of those who believe.

Command and teach these things. Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.

Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.

Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.

Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God. The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help. But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives. Give the people these instructions, too, so that no one may be open to blame. If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband, and is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds.

As for younger widows, do not put them on such a list. For when their sensual desires overcome their dedication to Christ, they want to marry. Thus they bring judgment on themselves, because they have broken their first pledge. Besides, they get into the habit of being idle and going about from house to house. And not only do they become idlers, but also gossips and busybodies, saying things they ought not to. So I counsel younger widows to marry, to have children, to manage their homes and to give the enemy no opportunity for slander. Some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan.

If any woman who is a believer has widows in her family, she should help them and not let the church be burdened with them, so that the church can help those widows who are really in need.

The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain," and "The worker deserves his wages." Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.

I charge you, in the sight of God and Christ Jesus and the elect angels, to keep these instructions without partiality, and to do nothing out of favoritism.

Do not be hasty in the laying on of hands, and do not share in the sins of others. Keep yourself pure.

Stop drinking only water, and use a little wine because of your stomach and your frequent illnesses.

The sins of some men are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them. In the same way, good deeds are obvious, and even those that are not cannot be hidden.

All who are under the yoke of slavery should consider their masters worthy of full respect, so that God's name and our teaching may not be slandered. Those who have believing masters are not to show less respect for them because they are brothers. Instead, they are to serve them even better, because those who benefit from their service are believers, and dear to them. These are the things you are to teach and urge on them.

If anyone teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ and to godly teaching, he is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions and constant friction between men of corrupt mind, who have been robbed of the truth and who think that godliness is a means to financial gain.

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that. People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.

But you, man of God, flee from all this, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance and gentleness. Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called when you made your good confession in the presence of many witnesses. In the sight of God, who gives life to everything, and of Christ Jesus, who while testifying before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you to keep this command without spot or blame until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which God will bring about in his own time—God, the blessed and only Ruler, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone is immortal and who lives in unapproachable light, whom no one has seen or can see. To him be honor and might forever. Amen.

Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life.

Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to your care. Turn away from godless chatter and the opposing ideas of what is falsely called knowledge, which some have professed and in so doing have wandered from the faith.

Grace be with you.

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