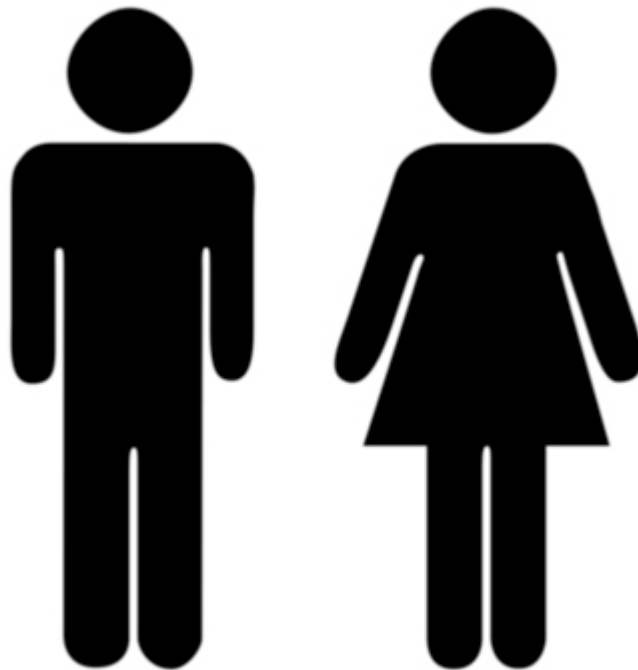


# PUTTING WOMEN IN THEIR PLACE



BY REMY DIEDERICH  
CEDARBROOK CHURCH

## PUTTING WOMEN IN THEIR PLACE

This document contains:

- Part One: *What Have We Done?*
- Part Two: *What Does the Bible Say?* page 10
- Part Three: *Paul Said What?* page 20
- Study: Women in Church Leadership, page 30

### PUTTING WOMEN IN THEIR PLACE

#### Part One: *What Have We Done?*

By Remy Diederich

Copyright 2007, all rights reserved.

Today I'm starting a three week series called "Putting Women in Their Place" – a study in what the Bible says about how God values women and the roles they can fulfill in the church. Now, I have no idea what people are thinking as we approach this topic. My guess is that for some of you this is a hotly debated issue with some of your family and friends. For others, it's something you haven't given a lot of thought but you have some questions. And then for others, maybe even most of you, it's a non-issue and you are surprised to hear that it is an issue to others.

To start things off I want to show you a video. But to be honest, I have mixed feelings about showing it. Let's watch and then I'll tell you why.

**Video:** This video is a commercial spoof with a young couple advertising "Masculina" a drug for women to take that will make them more like men so they can live in harmony with their husbands (sitting on the couch for long hours watching sports and not feeling troubled about dirty laundry on the floor). Go to [www.sermonspice.com](http://www.sermonspice.com) and search for "Masculina" to view video.

I initially wanted to show you this video as an icebreaker. I thought it was a funny way to broach the topic of men and women's roles. But then I thought, maybe this video is offensive to some people – especially today.

You see, I know that some people, especially women, came here today wanting to hear some good news about women from the Bible. For a variety of reasons they've lost their sense of worth as a woman and they are here in need of emotional and spiritual healing. So I was afraid that some women would think that by showing this video that I don't get it – that I don't understand their pain.

If you've been controlled all your life by insensitive, abusive men...if the message that you've been told is that you are inadequate simply by nature of being a woman - then this video wasn't so funny because it basically said...*in order to be appreciated by men, women have to BE men – that women aren't appreciated for just being who they are.*

Now, you might say, "*Aw, come on Remy, it was just a joke. Lighten up!*" I understand that. And that's why I laughed at first. But when you know there are wounded people around it's not

always wise to tell jokes. And as a public speaker I have to be sensitive to that. And so I wasn't going to show the video but then I decided to show it and use it as a teachable moment. I thought by talking about these things that I might be able to bring awareness and help sensitize us to some of the pain that women in our midst feel on a daily basis.

I want us to approach this topic of *Putting Women in Their Place* as more than a simple little Bible study, like, "*Let's see what the Bible has to say about women.*" It's a lot more than that. There's a lot of hurt and pain involved in this topic. I could pull women out of the audience right now who could tell stories that would shock you in regard to how they've been treated at home, in the church and in the workplace.

The level of injustice and abuse that these women have endured is shameful. And to add to the shame is the fact that some of their abuse was justified by people who quote the Bible. And so we need to approach this topic carefully and with compassion. In fact, I want to spend most of today simply laying the groundwork for the next two Sundays before we even do any Bible study.

So, what exactly is the issue that I'm addressing? Put simply, the issue at hand is that some people and churches believe that God created men and women with a very specific order where men are to lead and women are to follow, not only in the family but in the church as well as society. It's not that God has anything against women- they would say- it's just the way he established his creation like the sun and the moon. One isn't better than the other. They are just different and serve different roles and purposes.

The key Bible support for their thinking is fivefold...

- Genesis 2 and 3- This is where Adam is created first and empowered to name Eve implying that Adam has authority over Eve.
- 1 Corinthians - *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... For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.* 11:3,9
- 1 Timothy- *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 will be saved through childbearing--if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.* 2:12-15
- Ephesians - *Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.* 5:22,23
- Plus they quote the fact that Jesus chose all men to be his closest disciples.

So...these are some pretty convincing verses. Taken at face value you can see why people throughout the ages have felt justified in claiming God has given men authority over women.

But in spite of these verses there are other thinking people who love Jesus – and I count myself as one of these people – who look at these same verses and come up with a completely different interpretation- a different world view. They believe that God created men and women differently but their differences shouldn't restrict them to certain roles based on gender. Rather God frees men and women to fulfill the roles that best fit their personality, gifting and natural abilities. And Cedarbrook was founded on this idea as one of our core beliefs.

So, how do we deal with these verses that I just read? How can there possibly be any other interpretation than what is literally stated? I was in a group of leaders at one church when this issue came up and one guy said, "I just want to do what the Bible says!" And I thought...*well of course. We all want to do what the Bible says. But that's the question...what does the Bible say...not just to people living 2000 years ago. But what does it say to us living today in a completely different age in a completely different culture? Is everything transferable or are there some things that don't apply anymore?*

The key to good Bible interpretation is knowing what truths are timeless and apply to all people all the time, like "Do not murder" and all the Ten Commandments, and what truths are specific to a specific time and place, like when the Bible tells us what to eat...

*Do not eat any detestable thing. These are the animals you may eat: the ox, the sheep, the goat, the deer, ... However...you may not eat the camel, the rabbit or the badger. ... The pig is also unclean; ... You are not to eat their meat or touch their carcasses. Of all the creatures living in the water, you may eat any that has fins and scales. But anything that does not have fins and scales you may not eat; for you it is unclean. Deuteronomy 14:3-10*

But we eat these things, right?

Why is it that we feel so free to disregard some scripture yet bound to obey other scripture? We'll look at that over the next few weeks. We'll look at how we tackle tough issues like this. But before we do that I want to talk a little bit about how I came to believe what I do about women because it hasn't always been that way.

To be honest, I was conflicted about the role of women in both society and in the church for a number of years. I can remember when Geraldine Ferraro ran for Vice-President with Walter Mondale and not sure if that was a good thing or not. I didn't see women as being less than men in any way but the verses I quoted before seemed to point to an order that God had ordained. So, I didn't feel like it was up to me to decide. It seemed like God had already made the decision for me. And who was I to argue with God?

Plus my church experience was all in male dominated churches so I never met a woman in ministry or a woman that wanted to be in ministry (I guess they either kept quiet or left the church!). And I never saw what a church looked like with women in leadership. And then, you have to understand that when I grew up in the 50's and 60's, MOST professionals were men and most women were housewives or in lower paying fields. So, I never questioned why doctors were men or airline pilots were men or why pastors were men. It's just the way it was.

But then I went to Bethel seminary and in one of my classes a professor asked a question that opened my eyes to something I had never seen before. The professor told my class to break into small groups and share with the group what life would be like for us in our churches if we were of the opposite gender. That question rocked my world.

It was such a simple question and I immediately had an answer. I can remember telling my group... I said... *Wow, I never thought about this but if I was a woman I think I'd have to leave my church.* And when they asked why, I said, *Because my gifts are in leadership and teaching and that's not a part of their theology for women. Plus, I'm very outspoken and they have a hard enough time dealing with me as a man. If I was a woman I think I'd be too much to handle. I think if I was a woman I'd be labeled a trouble maker.* And then I thought of a number of women at my church who had strong personalities and I realized that that's how they must feel. And I felt bad for them.

In fact, since that time I've heard many outspoken women from other churches tell me how they were labeled as having a "Jezebel spirit" by church leaders. Do you know what that is? Some of you probably have no idea and others are probably all too familiar with what it means. Jezebel<sup>1</sup> was a godless wife of king Ahab in the Old Testament who killed God's prophets. And so when you call a woman "Jezebel" you are calling her an evil, rebellious woman who is working against God's purposes. It's not a kind thing to say! But after hearing the stories from these women, the truth was that these women weren't rebellious they were merely asking tough questions of the leadership that deserved honest answers.

But rather than respectfully addressing their questions the church leaders labeled these women as rebels. That way it took the spotlight off of them and put it on the women. Plus their husbands were usually accused of being passive and losing control of their wives. The simple answer to these couples was, *"There's nothing wrong with the church. What's wrong is you."*

Well, I walked away from my Bethel class that night really troubled. I thought, *That's not right. No person should feel shut down just because of their gender.* And I thought, *How many great leaders are we losing just because they are female? How many women feel the stirring of God in their lives to be used in ministry but they have no outlet for their gifting in their church?* And I promised myself and God that if I ever had any say in a church that I'd let women do whatever God had called them to do and not play God by telling them what they could and couldn't do.

So, as a result of that class, my eyes were opened to something I had never seen before. And once my eyes were open it just seemed like God showed me more and more things. I can remember watching the movie "The Color Purple" – a movie about women slaves in the 1800's – and crying at the injustice of how the women were treated like dogs. I was surprised by that. That's not my typical response but I saw it as God's Spirit in me responding to the injustice and showing me how God wanted me to feel about it. And then when I started to pastor and counsel I was shocked to meet woman after woman who had been abused by men who thought they had the right to dominate and control them.

---

<sup>1</sup> See 1 Kings 16 and following.

The sad thing to me was to see how men in the church perpetuated this injustice against women. But then I realized that it shouldn't surprise me because that's what many churches modeled. From greeters to ushers to worship leaders to elders to pastors, men were in control. Plus men were the ones interpreting the Bible. How would men feel if women were the only ones in positions of power and the only ones interpreting scripture? We wouldn't stand for that for a minute, right? So it dawned on me that churches were subtly telling their people that *men* are the ones who hear from god and *men* are the ones that should always be in control.

So I had this awakening about injustice against women and I knew that God doesn't tolerate injustice. Listen to what God says in the book of Amos...

*"The LORD's voice roars from his Temple on Mount Zion; he thunders from Jerusalem! Suddenly, the lush pastures of the shepherds dry up. All the grass on Mount Carmel withers and dies."*

Why is God roaring and why is the grass burned up before him?

*This is what the LORD says: "The people of Damascus have sinned again and again, and I will not forget it. I will not let them go unpunished any longer! They beat down my people... as grain is threshed with threshing sledges of iron. So I will send down fire .....* Amos 1:2-4

God is simply saying, *You have beat down my people – you've oppressed them – and so therefore I will beat you down.* I think this image of a tender shaft of grain being beaten down with a heavy iron sledge is a good picture of what often happens to women. But God won't tolerate oppression and neither can we. If we are lovers of God we are lovers of justice and we will be moved to take action to right what is wrong and to free the oppressed.

I recently read something that I think articulates not only the injustice that I saw but offers a solution as well. Back in 1987 Dr. John Barger spoke to a group of Catholic men about how he moved from being a dominating husband to one that loved and served his wife. When his talk was over no one said a word and he assumed that his talk was a failure. But what really happened was that the men were speechless. They had heard something about women that morning that they had never heard before, or at least, never understood before. His talk was later turned into a booklet called "Do You Love Me?" I want to read a good part of it here because I think it will help you to understand what I'm trying to say this morning.

*It is easy to scorn women, and most men do. We see women as physically weak, easy to intimidate, bound to the menial task of motherhood, emotional, illogical, and often petty. Or we see them as temptresses; in desire we idolize them and parade them across the pages of magazines, yet we scorn and hate them for their commanding sexual power over us...*

*I do not speak here merely of your scorn of women; I speak of mine as well. My relatives grew up on the streets during the Depression, ...drinking heavily and seeing women alternately as sex objects or servants...As a result I swaggered through marriage for many years, ruling my wife Susan and my seven children with an iron hand while citing Scripture as justification for my privileges and authority. After all, Scripture explicitly commands wives to obey their husbands.*

*Years of dominating my wife and children left them habitually resentful and fearful of me, yet unwilling to challenge me because of the fury it might provoke...I alienated Susan and the*

*children, and lost their love. Home was not a pleasant place to be –for them or for me. By 1983, Susan would have left me if it weren't for the children, and even that bond was losing its force. Then a number of dramatic events occurred, which wrought a profound change in my moral, psychological and spiritual life.*

One of the dramatic events that he's referring to is how, during child birth, his wife's placenta tore loose and started hemorrhaging causing the child to be stillborn. Dr. Barger tells what happened...

*At two in the morning in a stark, bright hospital delivery room, I held in my left hand my tiny lifeless son, and stared in disbelief at his death...I had the power to make [my family's] lives worse by raging against my baby's death and my wife's lack of love, or to make their lives better by learning to love them properly. I had to choose. And it was a clear choice, presented in an instant as I stared at my tiny, helpless, stillborn infant cradled in my hand. In that critical instant, with God's grace, I chose the arduous, undramatic, discouraging path of trying to be good.*

He tells about a number of afflictions that hit his family over the next few years. Then he says...

*In the midst of these many afflictions, I found that the only way I could learn to love, and to cease being a cause of pain, was to suffer, endure, and strive every minute to repudiate my anger, my resentment, my scorn, my jealousy, my lust, my pride, and my dozens of other vices. I began to hold my tongue. I started admitting my faults and apologizing for them. I quit defending myself when I was judged too harshly – for the important thing was not to be right or well thought of but to love. As I had made myself the center of my attention for too many years already, I said little about my own labors and sorrows; I sought to know Susan's, and to help her to bear them.*

Okay, everything I read so far is background. I've been leading up to the insights he gained about women by choosing to love and serve his wife.

*...frankly, once I started listening to Susan – once I began really hearing her and drawing her out – I was startled at how many and how deep were her wounds and her sorrows...Most were not sorrows unique to Susan. They were the sorrows that all women feel; sorrows that arise from the particular physiology of women and from their vocation as mothers, which gives them heavy duties and responsibilities while leaving them almost totally dependent on men for their material well-being and their spiritual support; sorrows that arise from loving their husbands and children intensely, but not being able to keep harm from those they love; sorrows that arise from the fact that in our society even the most chaste of women are regularly threatened by the lustful stares, remarks, and advances of men; and sorrows that arise because our society in general still considers women stupid, flighty, and superficial, and still places very little value on women and shows very little respect for them...*

*Women ...suffer these wounds far more often and with a greater intensity than most of us men ever realize. And unless we ask them, women generally do not speak to us of these sorrows – perhaps because we men so often dismiss their troubles as insignificant or write off women themselves as simply weak and whiny...*

Dr. Barger goes on to say that after three years of rebuilding trust; of listening and serving and loving his wife that her heart softened and their relationship was restored.<sup>2</sup> You see, when you take the time to understand someone's pain and serve THEIR needs instead of your own, it's amazing how much healing can take place.

Now, if there are husbands here that see themselves in this story and choose to love and serve their wives as a result of me reading this, that's fantastic. But that's not why I read this. I read this because I want us to hear another man talk about the awakening that he had in regard to the injustice that women face on a daily basis. I appreciated his honesty when he said that – he saw women as *either sex objects or servants*. Plus he said that *our society in general still considers women stupid, flighty, and superficial, and still places very little value on women and shows very little respect for them...*

You see, if we believe these things, whether you are a man or a woman the first thing we need to do is own that. You need to admit it and ask God's forgiveness for thinking so little of his creation. We will never be able to put women in their place if we think these things.

And the second thing I want us to see is Dr. Barger's solution. He became a servant to his wife. He said...*As I had made myself the center of my attention for too many years already, I said little about my own labors and sorrows; I sought to know Susan's, and to help her to bear them.*

You see, I think a big part of "putting women in their place" has to do with men *choosing* to put them there by honoring them and including them; at church, in the home and in the work place. Whether we like it or not, men have the power and it's going to take men giving up and sharing their power to put women in their place. I don't think God is looking for women to demand their rights and burn their bras and hate men like was popular in the '70's (although I really can't blame them for their frustration). I think what God is looking for is men who will pry their fingers off the reins of power and humbly and joyfully share the reins with women.

I'm not talking about *abdicating* their power but simply sharing it. Sometimes men feel threatened by women and their attitude is, "*Fine, you want power? You can have the power!*" And they leave, giving over *all* the power and choosing to not stay engaged. But that's not what God is looking for. What God is looking for are men to *willfully and joyfully* share their power. That's where the mystery is. That's where the beauty is...when power is shared. The world lusts for power. The world allows power to corrupt its leaders. But in *God's* kingdom power is *given away and shared by humble leaders*. That's what God has done with us and that's what he asks us to do with others. And as I'll show you next week, I think that's the meaning of true headship.

You know, that's what we've done here and I think we are a better church for it. I can't imagine Cedarbrook without our women leaders. When we opened ourselves to women in leadership we *doubled* our leadership base. We *doubled* the idea inventory. We *doubled* the number of

---

<sup>2</sup> Booklet: *Do You Love Me?* available at [www.sophiainstitute.com](http://www.sophiainstitute.com). The really amazing and powerful part of the story is that shortly after this restoration, his wife died of cancer. It was bitter sweet; bitter, of course, that he lost her. But sweet because he was able to reclaim his humanity and restore the relationship before she died. He was able to rest knowing that he had finally loved his wife.



spiritual gifts operating. And I think that's one of the things that make this church such an exciting place.

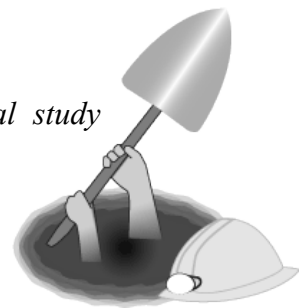
And so my encouragement to us today, especially to men, is to ask ...*Are you willing to listen and observe and see the injustice that most women endure? And when you see it, are you willing to do something about it; first at home and then beyond?* That's how God wants to use us to help put women in their place.

Well, that's a little background for this study. If you come back next week I'm going to give you an overview of what the Bible says about women and then share some insights that will help us deal with those difficult passages that I read today.

Prayer: *Father, give us eyes to see the injustice that women bear so quietly. And give women the healing that they so desperately long for. Might the church be a part of the solution and not the problem. Amen.*

#### GOING DEEPER

*Use the following questions to journal your answers during personal study or discuss them with your small group, family or friends.*



Before you take a look at scripture I want you to take a look at yourself.

1. Think/talk about your church experience and women's roles. What kind of roles have you seen women take in church through the years? What have been your thoughts about that through the years? (Are you okay with it? Troubled by it? Etc.)
2. If you are a woman, tell your small group what your thoughts about those roles have been and how it's impacted you for good or bad or neutral. (Note to small group leaders; there will be some women who have had a very negative experience and they've never had a chance to talk about it before. You might want to follow up with them later, one on one, to discuss their experience. The group might not be the right place.)
3. Consider what life would be like for you at church if you were the opposite gender. Would anything change for you – that is – would you feel like you had more or less opportunity? Has this been true at other churches for you?
4. Look up these verses and think/talk about the questions you have. Don't try to answer the questions at this time...just raise the questions. We'll look at them more in depth in coming studies:
  - a. 1 Corinthians 14:33-35
  - b. 1 Corinthians 11:3-12
  - c. 1 Timothy 2:11-15
  - d. Ephesians 5:22-24

## PUTTING WOMEN IN THEIR PLACE

### Part Two: *What Does the Bible Say?*

By Remy Diederich

Copyright 2007, All rights reserved

Last week we learned that there are two groups of people in the church today and they each interpret the Bible differently in regard to women. One group believes that that God has established a very specific order in creation where men are in charge and women are to follow their lead; at home, in the church and in society. So, as we talk about the possibility of a woman president, they wouldn't think that was right. They don't think that men are better than women. They just think that God set things up that way and if you respect his order things will go well with you. And if you break that order life will be more difficult.

The other group believes that God created men and women differently but God wants them to share the power of leadership based on their personality, their gifting and their natural talents rather than based on their gender.<sup>3</sup>

Last week I also shared the story of how over the years I moved from the first group to the second. And now today I am going to do my best to show you why I believe the Bible supports that view.

Let me just say that it's important that we base our thinking on what the Bible says and not on what "seems" right to us or "feels" right. If we believe that God has revealed himself through his Word then we need to look to his Word to shape our thinking.

Now, I already laid the toughest scripture on the table (in part one) that seems to say that God wants men to be in authority. I don't have time to read them all again but here's one for example...

*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.* 1 Timothy 2:11-14

Now, you might say, Remy, this is a slam dunk case. This is a no-brainer. With scripture like that clearly God has given men authority over women. How can you possibly even consider it saying anything else without twisting scripture? But before we take any Bible verse and run with it we have to ask ourselves...*what does the rest of the Bible say about this issue?*

You see, if the *rest* of the Bible says that women should be silent and have no authority, then we can take Paul's word in 1 Timothy at face value. But if it doesn't, then we have to work a little harder at trying to understand what Paul was saying.

---

<sup>3</sup> It's unfortunate that the church divides on issues like these. Let me caution you not to become engaged in an argument over this or other issues with church people. The devil loves when we do that. Simply share what you know with humility and respectfully listen to what others say. But don't get into trying to "prove the truth" to others. Remember, you COULD be wrong! Agree to disagree and let it go at that. Lay it aside and "prefer one another in love". The world loves to be right and argue their points. But we are not of the world.

It's kind of like doing research and plotting your data points on a graph. If you come up with only three data points you might be tempted to conclude that all data will continue to follow a straight line. But if you collect more data and plot those data points on the graph you might find that instead of a straight line your data is actually developing a curved line (sin wave) pattern. So what we want to do today is put as many scriptural data points on our graph as we possibly can so we can make the most accurate interpretation of what God is trying to tell us.

Let's start in Genesis chapter one.

*Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, ... So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.*  
Genesis 1:26,27

Okay, there is something very powerful going on here. We get a rare picture here of the Trinity of God speaking to Himself saying, "*Let US create something that reflects OUR nature.*" Now, God has revealed himself throughout the Bible as existing in three states simultaneously; the Father, the Son and the Spirit. Each state is fully God. No one is controlling the other.

So, my point is this...that God created man and woman as a reflection of himself. If no one is dominating in the Godhead then no one should be dominating in the *reflection* of the Godhead. There is no hierarchy. Everyone is equal.

Now, some people say that Jesus was submitted to the Father. That's true, but only while Jesus was walking the earth as a human being. Outside of his humanity Jesus is co-equal with the Father. And I think we see that kind of co-equality in the next few verses. Listen to what it says...

*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." ...God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.* Genesis 1:26, 28

Do you see that? God isn't making a distinction here between the man and the woman. He's speaking to *them*. He's giving *them* authority together to first subdue and then to rule over the earth. For either the man or the woman to seize control from the other or for either of them to abdicate their responsibility to the other would be to pervert the image of God. The image of God is reflected in them working *together* in harmony. God created them as co-rulers of God's creation and he saw this as very good.

Okay, now let's move to chapter two. Chapter two actually retells the creation story in more detail. Here it tells us that man was created first. God created Adam but he makes this observation.

*"It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."* Genesis 2:18

Adam was lacking something. He's not a reflection of the image of God on his own. You see, he couldn't make it on his own any more than the Trinity of God would be God with only the Father

and the Son. And so God sent him a helper to resolve the problem to make him complete, whole.<sup>4</sup>

Now that word “helper” is interesting because in our culture today the word “helper” doesn’t mean much. A helper in our world is simply someone who assists the person in charge but they have no authority on their own. But that’s not what it means here.

The word “helper” is a powerful word. It doesn’t mean servant. It doesn’t mean secretary. It doesn’t mean gopher, as in go-for this and go-for that. There’s nothing in the context that would imply that Adam needed a slave to do what he didn’t want to do or didn’t have time to do because life in the garden was pretty cushy. So we can’t impose a modern definition of the word “helper” on this word here.

The word “helper” literally means one who *enables* or *empowers* one who is in need. In fact, it is often used of God as in...

*We wait in hope for the Lord; he is our helper and our shield.* Psalm 33:20

*I am poor and needy; come quickly to me, O God. You are my helper and my deliverer; O Lord, do not delay.* Psalm 70:5

You could also translate the word “helper” with “rescuer” and that’s a good word because Eve came to *rescue* Adam from his loneliness. She came to rescue Adam from not being a true reflection of God. So the woman is given to man so that the two of them together reflect the image of God. Then it says...

*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.* Genesis 2:21,22

It doesn’t say here why Adam was created first or Eve second (so be careful not to read into the text something that is not stated). But what we can see is that by making Eve out of Adam we learn that they are made from the same stuff – in other words – God didn’t make Adam out of gold and Eve out of dirt. They are made out of the same stuff implying that they are equal.

Plus, Eve was taken out of Adam’s side. If she was taken out of his foot you might have grounds for saying that she was less than Adam but she was taken from his side, again implying equality. And Adam confirms that by saying...

*"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man."* 2:23

---

<sup>4</sup> Just to be clear, I’m not saying that a man or woman is only complete when they are married. I’m thinking more globally, that humanity expresses the image of God when men and women work together. Married couples have the opportunity to express God’s image in a way that single people can’t, but that doesn’t mean that single people cannot lead a full life. Single people can still model the image of God whenever they share power with the opposite sex, whether that’s at church, in a friendship, at work, etc.

Adam is telling us that Eve is just like him, that she is made from the same stuff that he is made of so he is aware of her equality.

So, so far, I think the Bible is consistent and clear that man and woman are created equal. They have been established by God as co-managers or co-rulers of God's creation. They have been given the right to rule the earth by mutually sharing the responsibility and power. And it's their unity expressed in sharing power that reflects the image of God.

But then something happens in chapter three that shatters that unity and perverts God's image in man and woman. Adam and Eve eat from a tree that God has forbidden. And so God places a curse (or consequence) on them both. This is what God says to the woman...

*"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."* Genesis 3:16

I want to look at two words here that I think are significant. The first one is "desire". *Your desire will be for your husband.* The word "desire" means *an intense longing*. Now, I've heard this interpreted in two ways. Some people have said it's a longing for relationship and intimacy that can't be satisfied. The woman looks to her husband for something emotionally that he is unable or unwilling to give. And others have said it's a longing to have power over the man, to control him. Maybe it's a little of both. But either way, the point here is that the perfect balance, the perfect unity that existed before the curse, is now gone. The relationship between man and woman has been distorted so we no longer have a reflection of the nature of God.

The other significant word here is the word "rule"...*and he will rule over you.* Suddenly the man is no longer content as his wife's equal. He wants to dominate her. He wants to control her. There's no longer a sense of a relationship of mutual understanding and shared power. He wants to call the shots. (I was talking with a guy after the first service and we were commenting on how easy it is to "play this card". If a guy wants to take control of a situation with a woman all he has to do is give a certain "look" or raise his voice and a woman will often yield to his demand.)

Now, I don't know about you but I think this archaic story does a pretty good job of summarizing very concisely and poetically the problem in most marriages as well as the problem between men and women in society as a whole. Ever since the Garden of Eden men and women have been in a power struggle and more often than not, men have been winning.

And not only did men begin to dominate women at the onset of the curse but they began to lose their respect for women. You can track it throughout history by reading what men have said. For example...

- *Socrates said that women are halfway between men and animals.*
- *Plato stated that evil people will be reincarnated as women.*
- *Aristotle saw women as defective males.*

We might laugh at this and think it's outrageous, but it shows you the deep seated misogyny (a hatred for women) that has existed in men. And with this kind of thinking in our history, we should understand that it's very hard to shake, even today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This kind of thinking is not as blatant as with Socrates and company but it's still there in various forms.

And what's really sad to me is that the church has so often reinforced these false ideas by taking God's curse as being *prescriptive* and not *descriptive*. Let me tell you what that means. When the doctor writes you a *prescription* she is telling you what you should do. But when you go to the pharmacist and ask him about the pill that was prescribed he *describes* to you what the pill does in your system. So, to *prescribe* means to instruct or direct and to *describe* simply means to observe and comment.

Now some people believe that Genesis 3:16 is a *prescription* – that God is telling us how to live. They think God's prescription is that men should rule over women. And some of the church's leading theologians have supported this idea. Let me read to you some of their quotes from throughout church history.

- John Chrysostom believed women to be a "*necessary evil*" and a "*natural temptation*".
- St. Jerome said that "*Woman is the gate of the devil, the path of wickedness, the sting of the serpent, in a word, a perilous object.*"
- Tertullian saw women as "*the devil's gateway*" of sin to men.
- Augustine thought another man would have been a better companion for Adam. In his mind, women were only for making babies.
- To Thomas Aquinas, women were defective by nature, not imaging God. Men needed to dominate them because women can't reason well on their own.
- Martin Luther said man reflected God's image but the woman only lesser, similar to the sun and moon. He also believed that man's dominion was woman's punishment for introducing sin into the world. He said;  
    "*Women are on earth to bear children. If they die in child birth it matters not, that is what they are here to do.*"

You see, all of these quotes justify in these men's minds why women need to be dominated. They can't be trusted. They are wicked. They are temptresses. They lack the ability to reason. They are just for bearing children. And they all point to Genesis 3 as God's stamp of approval on their thinking.

But what's funny about that is that they only picked the part of the curse that they like! If the curse is a *prescription* then they have to take the *whole* curse not just part of it. Let's look at the rest of the curse...

*"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..."* Genesis 3:18,19

You see, if you follow their logic - if that's God's *prescription* - then not only should men rule over women but they should never buy their groceries at a store, they should be growing all their own food. And they should be planting thorns and thistles in their crops and making sure that planting and harvesting the crop is as sweat-inducing and backbreaking of a task as they can possibly make it. But I don't see anyone doing that, do you? What's up with that?

My point here is that these men have misinterpreted Genesis 3 and used it to justify not only their low view of women but their domination of women. And since these men were some of the leading theologians of the church you can see how their negative view of women permeated the church and shaped the churches thinking on women. Plus they influenced the way we interpret the Bible. So when we come to difficult passages like those of Paul in the New Testament we have to recognize we carry a historical bias against women to these texts. You see, these men were responsible for keeping women out of positions of influence and power. Plus, their thinking played a big role in reinforcing and affirming the idea that women are merely servants and sex objects.

But the truth is that Genesis 3 is not a *prescription*. It's merely a *description* of the consequence of sin entering the world. You see, the role of the church isn't to enforce the curse. The role of the church is to *reverse* the curse, to do all we can to restore the image of God to the relationship between men and women. Men, in our relationships with women our challenge is to not play the control card. God is calling us to restore his image to our relationships with women by respecting women, including them in the decision making process and sharing the power.

And women, God is calling you to no longer cower in the corner and abdicate your responsibility but to find your worth and to find your voice in your relationships with men. (Every relationship is different and how you manage "finding your voice" may take some wisdom so I encourage you to come see me to talk about this process.)

Imagine what it would be like if every marriage and every interaction between men and women in the Cedarbrook community reflected the image of God. People would look at you in amazement and ask you what planet you are from. And you could simply say that you have worked hard to humble yourself and reflect the image of God in all your relationships. Wouldn't that be a great testimony? You see, the world is full of people who are quick to take control and use their power to intimidate and manipulate others. There's nothing special about that. But when two people share power, when they humbly defer to each other and prefer one another over themselves, that's a thing of beauty. That's a God thing. And that's our calling as his children.

So, in my research, Genesis 1-3 provides me with a lot of data for my graph. I'm seeing that this isn't a straight line. It's not a slam dunk like we might have thought in the beginning. It's more complicated than it looks after reading a few verses by Paul. But there is still more research to be done and more data to plot on the graph.

Now, before we leave Genesis three I want to point something out. Last week I said that some people use the fact that Adam *named* Eve as an example of Adam's authority over her. But when did he name her? In Genesis 3:20, the very first verse after the curse in Gen.3:19. So it's fair to ask, was Adam's naming Eve a sign of his authority over her or was it a result of the curse and an example of him trying to rule over her?

But Genesis isn't the only part of the Bible that supports the value and equality of women. If it's true that women should be ruled over by men we should never see women in leadership or authority over men in the Bible unless it's out of rebellion. But that's not true. Let me give you three examples of women in leadership in the Old Testament.

First, the biggest event in the entire Old Testament was the Exodus, right? And God used not one but three people to lead the way; Moses, Aaron and Miriam. In fact, God goes out of his way to point it out when he says...

*I brought you up out of Egypt and redeemed you from the land of slavery. I sent Moses to lead you, also Aaron and Miriam. Micah 6:4*

But unfortunately Miriam isn't the best example because of the two times she comes on the scene, one is to lead woman and the other time is to rebel against Moses!

A much better example of a woman having authority over men is in the book of Judges. In chapters four and five a woman by the name of Deborah is judging Israel. She had the same role as Samuel and Gideon and other male leaders. It was before they had kings and so the judge was the person who led the nation.

*Deborah, a prophetess, ... was leading Israel at that time... and the Israelites came to her to have their disputes decided. Judges 4:4,5*

Deborah was so well respected that Barak, the leader of the army, refused to go into battle without her at his side. And when they went into battle together they won a great victory. Sometimes people will say, *Well, God only allowed Deborah to lead because the men failed to step up and lead.* But there's no hint of that happening in this story. The writer of Judges tells the story without once making an excuse for her leadership or the lack of leadership by the men.

The third example is in the book of 2 Kings. King Josiah sends his priest and four other men to Huldah who was a prophetess and she spoke the word of God to the king.

*Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Acbor, Shaphan and Asaiah went to speak to the prophetess Huldah... 2 Kings 22:14*

And when they get there she speaks the word of God to them for the king. Again, there is no hint of apology that the king was seeking wisdom from a woman. So there are just a few snapshots of the Old Testament's view on women.

Now, as we move into the New Testament we get to see what Jesus thinks of women. If Jesus diminished women then that would have to weigh heavily in how we interpret other scripture. I'm not going to take the time to walk you through the gospels but there are seven things that I observe in regard to Jesus and women:

First, Jesus spoke to women in public even though that was never done (Luke 13:10f). This might not seem like a big deal but that culture kept men and women highly segregated. Men didn't talk to women in public. So when Jesus did, he was making a statement about their worth.

Second Jesus wasn't afraid to associate with women who were ceremonially unclean whether they were sick or whether they were prostitutes. One of the parables that I preached on recently showed how Jesus honored a prostitute by comparing her faith to the faith of a Pharisee.

Third Jesus had the audacity to say that a man's lust had nothing to do with the sin of a woman but his own sinful heart (Mt. 5:28). I read some quotes already about how men accused women



of being temptresses. But Jesus wasn't buying that excuse. He said, "No, don't lay that at the feet of women guys. You own that. *Your* lust is *your* sin. So deal with it and quit blaming women."

Next, Jesus stated that a woman's primary role was not motherhood as many at the time believed but to know and do the will of God, which was thought to be the role of men (Luke 11:27,28). Motherhood is great but society has too often reduced women to that role alone and Jesus put things in their proper perspective.

Fifth, Jesus included women as his followers.

Sixth, Jesus included women as disciples. A disciple is more than a follower. A disciple was a dedicated student of a rabbi. This was unheard of in New Testament times. In those days women weren't taught the Law of Moses. So for Jesus to take on women as his students was radical (Luke 10:38f).

And last, and probably the most remarkable, Jesus entrusted women as being witnesses to the resurrection. You see, in those days a woman's testimony was not admissible in court. They didn't think you could trust a woman's word. But Jesus did and he entrusted them with the most important testimony of all time – the fact that Jesus had risen from the dead (John 20:17). I think he was making a point by letting that happen, don't you?

Now, some might say, *But Jesus didn't appoint any women as one of the twelve, that shows that he didn't want them to have authority over men.* No, that just shows that Jesus was sensitive to his culture. That culture was dominated by men and the best way to preach the news of God's kingdom was through a medium that his audience would accept.

Plus, it was practical. Women were married and had children as young teenagers. So it just wasn't practical for them to be itinerant preachers. But I really believe that if Jesus came today and appointed twelve apostles that there would be a mix of men and women because our culture now accepts and values that. Today, you are missing an opportunity to reach people with the Good News of the kingdom if you restrict yourself to only male leaders.

Okay, that was a quick overview of Jesus' view of women. We've looked at what the Old Testament said about women, both before and after the curse. We looked at how Jesus treated women. And now let me very quickly note the role that women played in the early church:

- We see women in the upper room when the Spirit fell at Pentecost (Acts 1:12-14)
- Women were often at the core of a new church starting up which was totally contrary to the formation of Jewish synagogues where women weren't allowed. (Acts 16:13)
- The apostle Philip had four daughters who prophesied. (Acts 21:8)
- A woman by the name of Priscilla was shown to be a teacher and helped educate Apollos, an up and coming apostle. (Acts 18:18-28)
- Paul often mentioned and thanked women who assisted him in his ministry. He said of Euodia and Syntyche that they "have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel." (Phil. 4:3)

Well, there you have it, my fast and furious survey of women in the Bible. And I lay all that out as a prerequisite to our taking a look at the tough verses where Paul talked about women being silent in church, they should be submitted to men and not teach or have authority in the church. I've got my work cut out for me. But after today's study I hope you are feeling more confident that there will be a good answer regarding what Paul had to say.

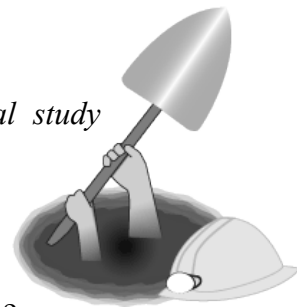
*Prayer: Father, forgive us for distorting your image in our relationships. Forgive us men for trying to rule over women and forgive the woman for losing their voice. Help us to reverse the curse by the power and wisdom of your Spirit. Help us to reject the power struggles of this world and show the world the meaning of love. Amen.*

#### FURTHER READING:

1. *Women in Church Leadership*: a paper written for Remy's Master's program. (see website)
2. *Community 101*- Gilbert Bilezikian. This book looks at how the church can model unity and mutuality through relationships.
3. *Women in the Church* – Stanley Grenz. This book takes a look at not only the hard scripture but gives an interesting overview of women throughout church history.
4. *Good News for Women* – Rebecca Groothuis. This is an excellent discussion of the hard Paulian verses as well as a challenge to some of the illogical thinking that permeates the issue.

#### GOING DEEPER

*Use the following questions to journal your answers during personal study or discuss them with your small group, family or friends.*



1. Read Genesis 1:26-30. What is it about the nature of God that Remy said is reflected in the relationship between Adam and Eve?
2. What were Adam and Eve commanded to do together?
3. Talk/think about the difficulties and beauty of sharing power. What's hard about it? What's good about it?
4. Give examples of when shared power has and hasn't worked in your life (work, home, church, etc.) or how you've observed it work or not work in others.
5. In Genesis 2 it says that Eve was created after Adam. Some have used this as proof that man has authority over woman. But think about the story of Jacob and Esau (read it if

you are not familiar with it in Genesis 25-27). How might the outcome of this story destroy this argument of men being superior?

6. Read Genesis 3:1-20. How were Adam and Eve both at fault in their sin? Do you think one was more at fault than the other?
7. What did Remy mean when he said that some people read God's curse as being *prescriptive* and some read it as *descriptive*. What has been the fallout throughout history of people see it as prescriptive (see the quotes that Remy referred to in his sermon from various historic people).
8. Read the story of Deborah in Judges 4 and 5. Is there anything in the story that points to Deborah not being called of God or of Deborah being rebellious in her leadership? What does that tell you about her calling?
9. Read the following verses and comment on how they indicate Jesus' attitude toward women:
  - a. Luke 13:10-13
  - b. John 4:7-27
  - c. Luke 10:38-42
  - d. John 11:21-27
  - e. Mark 5:25-34
  - f. Matthew 5:28
10. Read the following verses to see how women were involved in the history of the early church:
  - a. Acts 1:12-14
  - b. Acts 16:13-15
  - c. Acts 8:3, 9:1,2
  - d. Acts 21:8,9
  - e. Acts 18:18-28
  - f. Romans 16:1-16 (note the number of women thanked)
11. After this study is your view of women changing at all and, if so, how?

### Part Three: *Paul Said What?*

*By Remy Diederich*

*Copyright 2007, all rights reserved*

Over the last two weeks I've pointed out that there is a big disagreement in the church at large. Some people think that the Bible supports men being in charge or having authority over women; in the home, in the church and in society in general. In their opinion, this is God's divine order and respecting this order will help "keep the faith". Breaking this order is to go against God and the Bible.

But there are other people who think that the idea of men being in charge wasn't God's plan at all. They think God created men and women to share power and share responsibility. And the only reason that men ended up controlling women throughout history was when sin entered the world and distorted the image of God.

Isn't it odd that people who love Jesus and believe in the Bible can disagree so strongly on such a serious issue? So who is right? Well, it's hard for me to say one group is wrong when I know how sincere they are. They are as committed to God and the Bible as I am. So I hate to say that I am right and they are wrong. But I will say that I agree with the second view<sup>5</sup>. You see, I don't believe that the glory or the wonder or the mystery of God is shown in one person having power over another person. I think that's the way of the world. I think the mystery of God is shown when two people respect each other's opinion and humbly work together to reach a mutual agreement, whether that's in the home, the church or the office.

And I think the best example of that is when Jesus came to earth.

*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: 6 Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, 7 but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 8 And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross! Philippians 2:5-8*

Even though he was God he didn't exert his power over people. Jesus humbly shared his power with his disciples. So as I'm weighing out these two arguments I keep this in mind.<sup>6</sup>

Now, to close out this series this morning I want to look at two of the most debated texts in the Bible that relate to this issue. These two texts have raised a lot of questions, but more than that,

---

<sup>5</sup> I want to remind you that whenever I teach my goal isn't to get people to agree with me. My calling is to do my best to hear from God and then do my best to teach others. It's the job of the Spirit to use what I've said to teach people whatever He wants. So, if you disagree with me on any subject – there's no offense taken. I trust that you are hearing from God too and if either of us are wrong, the Spirit is relentlessly working to bring correction to our thinking.

<sup>6</sup> In their defense, the first view would say that this verse supports their view because Jesus *had* authority over everyone yet still humbled himself. That's the way they see men and women relating. I would say, "In theory, yes. But in reality?" There's something about that theology that plays into our fallen nature. History tells us that when men think they have preeminence they use it to their advantage and women are often the loser. I will admit that there may be some significance to Adam being created first but I haven't heard a good case for what that significance is. To me, it's all speculation and that's not good enough.

have caused a lot of pain. Men have used these verses to suppress women and deny them their God-given rights.

To be honest, I questioned whether I should do an in-depth study of these texts on a Sunday morning. These two texts can be very confusing. It'll take more work on your part than usual. But as I thought about it I decided that you can do it. I think you are up to the task! In fact, I think many of you will welcome the chance to get to the bottom of these verses and discover the issues at hand for yourself and not just go on what someone else told you to think<sup>7</sup>.

I've got two goals in mind; one is to help resolve some questions that you might have about what the apostle Paul said about women. It's hard to trust the Bible when it says such seemingly negative things about women. So I want to help you work through that and answer your questions. And the other goal is to help us understand how to read the Bible – especially as it relates to tough topics.

So let me start with just a few ideas about how to approach tough topics in the Bible.

**1. Understand what the whole Bible says on a topic.**

That's what I tried to help us do last week. Before I preached on these texts today I wanted us to see what the rest of the Bible says about women. You don't want to base your theology on just a few isolated verses if you can help it.

**2. Understand the cultural biases that exist in you and in others.**

Again, I tried to help us with this last week by quoting from philosophers and theologians throughout history who showed their bias against women. But it's not just other people's biases. It's *your* biases too. Some of us have had negative experiences (or positive) that influence how we see things. For example, if you were raised by an abusive father you may want to find scripture that removes men from power. If you were raised by a highly emotional, irrational mother, you might be looking for verses that support male authority.

**3. Understand the story in the text.**

Whenever we read the Bible we have to remember that these aren't words written in a vacuum. They are words written for a purpose. Behind every word is a story and so we have to get in touch with the story behind the words.

So let's start by looking at Paul's letter to the Corinthians. The story in Corinth was that they had a lot of disagreements about what was the right way to live the Christian life and the right way to worship. So Paul writes them a letter addressing each problem one at a time. He talks about how to deal with sexual immorality. He talks about how a church meeting should function. He addresses what should take place at a communion meal. He deals with whether or not Christians should eat food sacrificed to idols. And he helps people understand the role of spiritual gifts.

---

<sup>7</sup> My guess is that of all the people that have been persuaded on this topic, most of them have been persuaded by their church's' stance and experience and not by their personal Bible study.

Then in chapter 11 Paul talks about the tradition of women wearing head coverings when the church gathers to worship. Some people said it was important, other people said it was no big deal and to not worry about it. So Paul writes to them and gives them four reasons why women *should* wear head coverings at their church meetings...

1. *It shows respect for God's creative order.*
2. *Because of the angels.* No one knows for sure what that means so I won't take the time to address the possibilities now.<sup>8</sup>
3. *It's self-evident.* Paul says that it's obvious just by looking at men and women that a woman's head should be covered and not a man's. I can't be sure but there's a chance that Paul is making a little joke about his being bald, along with other men.<sup>9</sup> He might be smiling, saying, "Hey, look around at all these shiny heads of men and the beautiful hair of women! Isn't it obvious that God wants women to cover their head and not men?"
4. *"We've always done it that way"!* Isn't that why we do everything a church?! Paul is basically saying...*that's what we've done from the beginning of time and it's not changing now!*

Now, for the sake of my purposes this morning I'm only going to focus on the first reason, that women should wear a head covering *because it shows respect for God's creative order*. Paul starts by saying...

*But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the husband is the head of his wife, and God is the head of Christ.* 1 Corinthians 11:3

Now, some people say that this is clear support for the idea that men should have authority over women. They make the assumption that Paul is talking about a chain of command and so they lay it out like this. God is head or the ruler over Jesus and so on down the line...

**God**  
**Jesus**  
**Man**  
**Woman**

And they say that this is the obvious interpretation because of what Paul says after this. His reasoning isn't based in the culture (like they accuse the other view of doing) but it's based on the creation account in the Bible. He says...

*For a man ought not to have his head veiled, since he is the image and reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man. Indeed, man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man.* 1 Corinthians 11:7-9

Sounds convincing. This is what I argued when I believed in this view. But here's my challenge to this interpretation. If you look at verse three, Paul didn't mention the names in the order that I listed: God- Jesus–Man-Woman. Let's look at it again...

---

<sup>8</sup> A couple ideas; one, the angels are present in worship and watching what we are doing. Two, the angels cover their faces before God and so therefore women should too.

<sup>9</sup> There is one description of Paul in ancient history that said he was short, bald and bow-legged.

*But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the husband is the head of his wife, and God is the head of Christ. 1 Corinthians 11:3*

If Paul was laying out a chain of command he wouldn't have said it that way. He would have said...

*"God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of man and the husband is the head of his wife."*

But he didn't say it that way. If you were to map out what Paul said it looks like this...



Paul was listing out the names in the order of birth and who they came from; Adam, Eve and then Jesus.

So, the first assumption that people often make here is that Paul is talking about a chain of command. I disagree. I think that idea is imposed on this text and it doesn't warrant it. The second assumption that people make with this text is in how to interpret the word "head". Today we use that word "head" to mean "boss" or "authority". But I think Paul was simply pointing out who came from whom.

For example, to put it another way, you might say...

*Adam came from Jesus (Jesus was thought of as the Creator in the New Testament), Eve came from Adam. Jesus came from God.*

Paul is telling the Corinthians that when men don't wear head coverings and women do wear them it is a way of acknowledging where they came from. It's a way of honoring God's wisdom in creation. I don't think it has anything to do with who is in authority over the other. Paul is simply restating what it says in Genesis 2, that Eve was created out of Adam.

Let's take another look at verses 7-9.

*For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man. 1 Corinthians 11:7*

Now, whenever you interpret a text like this you have to be careful not to jump to conclusions. Don't read more into it than is there. It's easy to *think* that Paul is putting women down here. But he's not. When Paul says that Adam is the image and reflection of God he's simply saying that Adam was created first. Adam reflected God because he was the firstborn. And when he says that Eve was the reflection of Adam he's just restating the fact that Eve was formed out of Adam. Eve reflected Adam.

Paul's not saying that Adam was the image of God and Eve wasn't. We know from Genesis 1 that Adam and Eve *together* were the reflection of God. So that can't be what Paul means. Paul continues on...

*Indeed, man was not made from woman, but woman from man. 1 Corinthians 11:8*

Is that true? Sure. So we are okay with verse eight but the next verse is the tough one...

*Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man.*  
1 Corinthians 11:9

Now, at first glance this sounds like a slam against women. It sounds like Eve was made to be Adam's servant. But don't jump to conclusions. That's why we looked at Genesis 2 last week. If you weren't here we learned that Adam was born first but he was never meant to be alone.

All alone, Adam was insufficient. He was inadequate. All by himself he didn't reflect the glory of God. He needed Eve to rescue him from his inadequacy. So, yes...the woman was made for man. She was made to complete the image of God. That's a true statement. There's no offense there unless you take it that way. (This is where you have to watch for your biases because they'll naturally cause you to interpret a text to reflect your personal experiences.)

And again, remember the overall topic here. Paul is simply trying to get women to continue to wear their head coverings during their church meetings. I don't think this is a teaching on male and female relationships. It's a teaching on proper attire in a church service and how to best honor God in worship. To Paul, when men *don't* wear head coverings and women *do* wear head coverings it's a sign of respect to God.

But having said all of this my guess is that Paul knew that people would misinterpret him. So Paul qualifies all of his talk about Adam being first by saying this...

*In the Lord, however, ...*

That's a *significant* qualifier. He's telling us that the tradition of head coverings was passed down from the Jews - who *did* believe in men having authority over women. He's not advocating that part of head coverings, so, just to be clear he says...

*in the Lord...that is – “for those of us who are followers of Jesus”...*

*...woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God. 1 Corinthians 11:11,12*

Paul balances out what people might fear he is saying by telling us that he's not talking about man *or* woman being more important. He's talking about worshipping God appropriately and giving him all the honor that he is due.

So, here in Corinthians, it isn't about the role of men and women. It's not a proof text for why women should submit to men. It's simply Paul's reasoning for why women should wear head coverings during worship. To read more into it is unfair to both the text and to women.

Okay, well, if I haven't totally confused you...let's move on to the next text in 1 Timothy. Now, we can get a sense of the “story” here in 1 Timothy simply by reading some of the parts of Paul's letter. Paul tells us that the church in Ephesus had a few problems:

1. There were false teachers misapplying the Jewish law. 1 Timothy 1:3-7



2. These teachers were taking advantage of new female converts to the faith. 2 Timothy 3:6-9
3. These women were spreading the false teaching from house to house. 1 Timothy 5:13-15

So Paul's got a big problem on his hands and somehow he has to fix this problem long distance. And so he sends a letter to his young pastor friend, Timothy. Paul gives a number of instructions in the letter to Timothy on corrective action but there are two here that I want to focus in on regarding women...

*A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.* 1 Timothy 2:11

Let me rewind here a bit. We need to understand some background here. In most cities around the Mediterranean Sea there were groups of Jewish men who met in synagogues for worship. Women weren't allowed in the synagogue. Worship was the business of men. The woman's business was to take care of the home and let the men worry about formal worship.

Now, along comes the church. The church looked a lot like a Jewish synagogue only with two big differences, first, they worshipped Jesus as God and second, they made outsiders insiders. That means that Gentiles and women and slaves were now welcome in worship services. This was *radical* stuff! Gentiles, women, and slaves - for the first time - were allowed to hear the Bible taught. But *more* than that - they were allowed to speak words in the meetings that they felt God had given them to speak; to prophecy, to teach, maybe even speak in tongues.

Well, you can imagine how excited these women were. This was huge! This was unprecedented in history. They were on the cutting edge of a new religion that gave women direct access to God. But since they had never been in a synagogue and they were never allowed to learn the Bible they were totally ignorant of what was being said. So they'd go to the church meetings and ask questions of their husband or the person next to them or their friend across the room.

Suddenly these church meetings became pure chaos. And with all the false teaching going around the church couldn't afford any more chaos. So Paul tells the women that it's fine to learn but to do it quietly and in full submission. That means that rather than question or disagree with what's being taught they should just accept it or at least ask questions respectfully.

But Paul took his restriction beyond that. As I mentioned, some of these women had been listening to the false teachers and now these women were bringing that teaching into the church. They had become pawns of the false teachers to spread their heresy and create disunity. So Paul decides that rather than let this go any further and risk the church falling apart, he's going to take some drastic action. He tells them...

*I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.* 1 Timothy 2:12

Paul doesn't go so far as to kick women out of the meetings. That would be crossing the line. But he *did* tell them that they had to be quiet.

Now, he knows this is harsh so he brings some biblical weight to his argument. This isn't just Paul being a killjoy. Paul is basing his command on the Bible. He says...

*For Adam was formed first, then Eve<sup>10</sup>. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. 1 Timothy 2:13, 14<sup>11</sup>*

Okay, now, just like before...we have to be careful not to jump to conclusions. Don't read more into this than there is. You see, some people assume that this verse proves that women are more easily deceived than men and that's why they need men to rule over them. In fact, this is the verse that people use to justify why women shouldn't teach men and they should only be allowed to teach other women or children.

Now folks, sometimes you just have to step back and reason your way through these arguments. You don't even need a Bible verse to clear the fog. Just a little logic! (Sometimes Christians jettison logic and think that quoting another Bible verse is all they need!) For example; if women shouldn't be allowed to teach men because they are easily deceived, then why on earth would we want to let women teach other easily deceived women or vulnerable children? If women are more easily deceived than men then we shouldn't let women teach *anyone*. I mean, do you realize that *right now* there are women over in our children's center teaching our children!!! We should run over there and rescue them from being deceived if this is true!! That's crazy isn't it? So that can't be what Paul is saying here.

Personally I feel like *I am* easily deceived without the input of women. That's why I want to have both men and women on staff and on our LEAD Team. And that's why I always talk with Lisa about big decisions to make sure that I'm seeing things clearly. I mean, what would it say about me if I couldn't listen to Christine preach – if I didn't think she had anything to say to me? How arrogant!

I think Paul is simply saying, *Look guys, this is a serious situation here and desperate times require desperate measures. So I'm not letting women teach, have authority or even speak in a church meeting until this whole thing blows over and gets resolved. And I have biblical precedent for this because back in Genesis 3 there was a false teacher (the serpent) who led a young woman (Eve) astray and I'm not going to let that happen again. Not on my watch! I want women to keep on learning. That's a good thing. But I want them to do it quietly and in full submission to the traditions of the church. In time, they will be able to resume their verbal participation in the church meetings.*

---

<sup>10</sup> There may be two reasons here; the first being simply that Adam was created first. I wonder if Paul is saying, *"I'm going to let men talk for now. This is what happened in creation and I'm using that as my precedent. Women will get their chance later, just like Eve came on the scene later."*

<sup>11</sup> In thinking about this, don't forget all the bad things that Paul said about Adam in regard to Genesis 3. To the Corinthians he said...

*For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 1 Corinthians 15:22*

In the book of Romans Paul talks extensively about how sin came into the world through Adam...

*...just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, ... death reigned from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command, as did Adam, ... Romans 5:12-14*

He knows that Adam was more at fault than Eve. So be careful not to lose sight of the role that Adam and Eve *both* played in the entrance of sin into the world.

Paul was being very heavy handed here and he knows it. But this is lost on some people that read his letter today. They assume that everything Paul said applies today. But it doesn't. Some commands are timeless and apply to all people at all times. But other commands have a temporary application. They are for specific people, in a specific place dealing with a specific issue.

I'm sure if Paul knew that the world was going to read this letter for centuries to come that he would have put some qualifiers in it. But he didn't. And so we have to carefully read his letters and decide what commands are meant for his initial readers and which commands still include us today.

Well, I've thrown a lot at you this morning. I give you permission to be confused! (The truth is, whenever you commit to studying the Bible, you'll be confused. That's a part of it. Finding truth is a process and you have to be willing to walk through the fog to get where you want to go.) But I hope that – even if you are confused – you realize that there is another way to read these verses. It's not a slam dunk. It's not obvious from the Bible that men should rule over women. And so, when we are talking about the possibility of restricting the freedom of half the population (all women) I think we have to be 100% certain of what the Bible says.

I want to close out this series by our sharing communion. And to give us some focus during our time I'd like us to reflect on some words that Paul wrote to another church, the church of Galatians. He said...

*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. Galatians 3:25-28*

Communion is about our unity in Christ. It doesn't celebrate anyone having authority over others. The only authority we should have over us is Jesus. When we break off a piece of bread, every piece is the same. There are no pieces better than the other, are there? You see, in the Lord, there is no Jew or Greek, no black or white, no rich or poor, no male or female. *There is no distinction.*

So, as you receive communion this morning, how do you see yourself? Do you see yourself as better than others? Or do you see yourself less than others? In Christ, we are all one – we are all equal.

Men, I wonder if God has been speaking to you through this series about your attitude toward women. Are you willing to admit that you haven't respected women like you should? That you've treated some women like servants and others like sex objects? That you haven't respected their opinion and you've sought to control them? Maybe, as you take communion this morning, God is asking you to change and make that right.

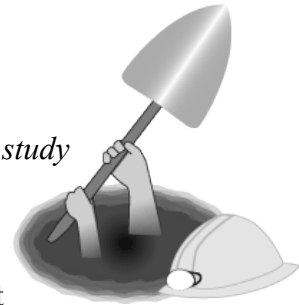
Women, as you receive communion today it might be a new beginning for you. Maybe you've always seen yourself as being less than men. You felt like you were a second class citizen and that your gifts didn't count. Your voice didn't count. But maybe today you sense that God

wants to give you your voice. You sense that God is breathing new life into you and calling you to take your place at the table. He's invited you to the head of the table.

**Prayer:** *Father, ultimately this issue is all about your glory. We want so much to reflect your glory. We want to reflect the wonder of the Godhead and the reality of shared power and humility – of preferring others over ourselves and deferring our rights to honor others so that people might see You in us and worship. Help us to do this by the power of your Spirit. Amen.*

## GOING DEEPER

*Use the following questions to journal your answers during personal study or discuss them with your small group, family or friends.*



1. Talk/think about the cultural shift that happened when women were allowed to be a part of a worship service in New Testament times. What would it have been like for a man to suddenly experience women into the service; the good and the bad? What would have it been like for a woman? What would it have been like to be the pastor overseeing this transition?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 10:23-33. What bearing do you think these verses have on both 1 Corinthians 11:1-11 and 1 Timothy 2:9-15? In other words, there is a principle here that Paul uses to deal with the new found freedom of Christians.
3. Read 1 Corinthians 11:1-16. What are the five reasons that Paul says a woman should wear a head covering in a church service? See also sermon notes.
4. What are the two views that people have regarding the meaning of this text? Try to put the arguments for both sides into your own words.
5. How do the two views interpret the word “head” in this text?
6. How can 1 Corinthians 11:7-9 (that is, Genesis 2) be used to support both sides?
7. What makes the most sense to you and why? (Be sure to include Bible verses from other parts of the Bible to support your reasoning.)
8. Read 1 Corinthians 11:11,12. How are these words consistent with what he said in the earlier text? Or, do they seem like a contradiction of his earlier words?
9. Moving to 1 Timothy read the following verses to get a feel for the problems in Ephesus:
  - a. 1 Timothy 1:3-7
  - b. 2 Timothy 3:6-9
  - c. 1 Timothy 5:11-15

d. 1 Timothy 2:8-10

10. If you were Paul and had started this church, lived with the people and then saw these things happen, how would you feel? What would you do? (See Acts 18-20 for story of Paul and Ephesus).
11. Paul again references Genesis 2 to support his edict. What are the two ways people interpret how he uses Genesis 2?
12. Bonus Point: Read 1 Timothy 2:15. This verse has confounded many! What do you think he's saying?

# Women in Church Leadership

By Remy Diederich

Copyright 2004

[Note: this paper was written as an Ethics class paper at Bethel Seminary. It was written in outline form to spare the professor from reading a book! ]

Given that women and men stand on equal ground before God, is it biblically warranted for men to claim exclusive access to high-status positions solely on the basis of their gender?<sup>i</sup>  
Specifically, is it ethical for women to be eliminated from the role of pastor/elder in the local church?

## I. The Problem

### A. Two Opposing Views

1. Many Christians believe that women are to be subordinate to men in both the home and church due to certain biblical texts.<sup>ii</sup>
2. But in recent years these assumptions have been challenged by respected evangelical scholars who suggest that the traditional view is based on false assumptions and gender bias.

### B. Defining the terms:

1. *Patriarchy*: a system of social life and thought that entrenches male dominance.
2. *Egalitarian*: the view that in home, church or society, qualified men and women equally may exercise leadership.<sup>iii</sup> Note: it does *not* imply that men and women are identical other than their biology.<sup>iv</sup>
3. *Traditionalist*: the view that women are subject to men based on the creation account and other biblical texts.<sup>v</sup>
4. *Complementarian*: the idea that men and women have been created by God to complement one another. They are not interchangeable. Traditionalists have tried to adopt this term<sup>vi</sup> for their view but egalitarians also believe in complementarianism and refuse to use the word to replace traditionalism.
5. *Misogyny*: Latent or subtle hatred of women.<sup>3</sup>

## II. The Traditionalists View

- A. The Bible teaches that men are superordinate and women subordinate.
- B. To reject this view is to reject biblical authority, that is, caving in to the current cultural mores<sup>vii</sup> and forsaking a belief in the Bible as God's word.<sup>viii</sup>
- C. This is the tradition of 2000 years of church history.
- D. The view is based on three New Testament passages that are rooted in the creation account of Genesis 2.<sup>ix</sup>
  - 1. I Corinthians 11:2-16: women are to cover their head as a sign of being in submission to their husband because woman came *from* man and woman was created *for* man.
  - 2. I Corinthians 14:24-36: women must be in submission at the worship service. If they have questions they are to ask their husbands at home.
  - 3. I Timothy 2:11-15: women must learn in submission. They are not to teach or have authority over men.
- E. Genesis 2: God made man first. Woman was made from him to be his helper. Adam named Eve signifying dominance over her.<sup>x</sup>
- F. Women are not inferior to men but they have been created differently from men for different purposes.<sup>xi</sup>

Because these commands are rooted in creation, culture has nothing to do with whether or not these commands should be obeyed today. Therefore believers must follow the biblical mandate. To not obey them is to walk in error and disobedience.

## III. Could they be wrong?

The traditionalist view has gone unquestioned for centuries. But could they have been looking at scripture through the wrong grid? Could *they*, in fact, be the ones who have allowed culture to influence *them*? This happened with the Christian support of slavery. Has it also happened with the traditionalist view of women?

### A. The Curse of Genesis 3:16 and misogyny.

- 1. "He will rule over you" is not prescriptive but descriptive of what will happen.<sup>xii</sup>

2. The curse distorted men's view of women and set in motion an oppressive patriarchal culture that exists to this day.<sup>xiii</sup>
  - a. Greek writers
    1. Pseudo-Demosthenes notes various "uses" for women (sexual, work, procreation).<sup>xiv</sup>
    2. Homer's "Great Conversation" of 73 people in the Iliad contains no women and the discussion about women expresses thoughts that are thoroughly mean-spirited.
    3. Socrates says that women are halfway between men and animals.<sup>xv</sup>
    4. Plato states that evil people will be reincarnated as women.
    5. Aristotle sees women as defective males.
  - b. Philosophers
    1. Schopenhauer saw women as foolish and useful only for children.
    2. Nietzsche considered men to be shallow who thought women to be equal.
    3. Darwin found women inferior in all aspects.
    4. Freud saw women hopelessly envious of man's biology (penis envy).
  - c. Religious thought
    1. Jewish:
      - a. Daily prayer: *"Thank you Lord for not making me a woman."*
      - b. Jewish women were dominated by males in every aspect of life.
        1. It was men who received the sign of the covenant (circumcision).
        2. Women were kept from the inner temple, separated and silenced in the synagogue, not considered true members and were not permitted to be taught Jewish law.
        3. Men preferred sons and thought it better to burn the Law than give it to a woman.
        4. They could not bear witness and were to be veiled in public.<sup>xvi</sup>
    2. Church Fathers thought women were to be avoided because they were a *"subtle and dangerous temptress always inclined to beguile man and to inflame him with evil passions."*



- a. John Chrysostom believed women to be a "*necessary evil*" and a "*natural temptation*".
  - b. Tertullian saw women as "*the devil's gateway*" of sin to men.
  - c. Augustine thought another man would have been a better companion for Adam . Women were for procreation only.
3. To Aquinas, women were defective by nature, not imaging God.<sup>xvii</sup> Men needed to dominate because women can't reason well.<sup>xviii</sup>
4. Luther said man reflected God's image but the woman only lesser, similar to the sun and moon. Man's dominion was woman's punishment for introducing sin into the world.<sup>xix</sup>
5. John Knox thought women should be subordinate because the female nature was stupid, weak, unstable, and cruel.<sup>xx</sup>
6. Charles Hodge said that for the general good all women should be deprived of the rights to self-government.<sup>xxi</sup>

It was out of this kind of philosophical and theological mindset that Christian theologians have formulated their views regarding women.

**B. Inferior sex?** It was only natural (as with Knox) to subject women to male authority due to their obvious inferiority.

1. Calvin saw women as "born to obey men".<sup>xxii</sup>
2. To John Knox, it was repugnant by nature for woman to be in leadership.<sup>xxiii</sup>
3. Fundamentalists thought that women's roles were to be mothers of good men, laying aside personal ambition for husbands and brothers advancement. For a woman to leave her sphere was to be an "*instrument of Satan*." It was a sign of the last days.<sup>xxiv</sup>

C. **Equal but different?** Even when theologians began to see men and women as equal but different<sup>xxv</sup> the restrictions remained. Throughout church history when God moved through women, men often stepped in to restrict their influence.

1. Early Church: When the church meetings moved from the house into institutionalized buildings men took back the positions of leadership that women had functioned in.<sup>xxvi</sup>
2. Fundamentalism: Men sought to take back the church for men after great female advancements in the late 1800's and early 1900's.<sup>xxvii</sup>
3. Feminism Movement: Out of a fear that the church was going down a slippery slope the conservative Christians have organized to stop the slide into cultural relativism.<sup>xxviii</sup>

D. **Slavery is all too similar.** Blacks were once thought to be inferior to whites, then equal but functionally different. Today we know that there are no justifications for separating the races.<sup>xxix</sup>

Christianity has not been spared from error merely due to a sincere dedication to scripture and prayer. Our best theologians have been proven grossly wrong in the past. Are we above error today? Because of this we should step cautiously and humbly into areas that would restrict others freedom.

#### IV. An Alternative Viewpoint

The traditionalist view has taken a few biblical points on a graph and assumed a straight line connects them all. But there are alternative views that also connect the dots and are still biblical, although they may not take the "obvious" path that traditionalists assume.

##### A. Genesis 1:26-28 and the nature of God.

1. God is relational by nature.
2. Man *and* woman in relationship are the expression of His nature.
3. God gave both man *and* woman dominion.
4. There is no expression of hierarchy.<sup>xxx</sup>

## **B. Genesis 2**

1. Adam's priority in creation doesn't necessitate his priority in status.<sup>xxx</sup>
2. Eve's status as "helper" is a term of equality, not subservience.<sup>xxxi</sup>
3. Adam's "naming" of Eve does not follow the pattern of his naming the animals and therefore does not show his authority over Eve.<sup>xxxii</sup>

## **C. Women leaders in the Bible**

If God does not desire women to be in leadership then one would think that there would be no valid examples of female leadership in the Bible. But even in a culture that could be considered hostile to women, we find female leaders who are called and used by God.

1. Miriam - note especially Micah 6:4 that makes a point to underline her leadership.
2. Deborah - Judges 4-5. As a prophetess she led and delivered Israel without even a hint of dishonor from the scripture.
3. Huldah - 2 Kings 22:14-20. King Josiah sends the priest and royal cabinet to meet with her to hear God's word for Israel.
4. Phoebe - Romans 16:1<sup>xxxiii</sup>. Phoebe was mentioned first in Paul's list, a deacon[ess] and a helper of many, even Paul.
5. Priscilla - Romans 16:3. She is mentioned before her husband which is odd in that culture unless she was the more active leader.<sup>xxxiv</sup> In Acts 18:26 she is used to teach Apollos, a great leader in the church.
6. Junia - Romans 16:7 - A disputed name (whether it is male or female)<sup>xxxv</sup> but evidence exists<sup>xxxvi</sup> that Junia was female and an apostle.

Some traditionalists would say that these examples are exceptions and/or concessions due to men's failure to lead well.<sup>xxxvii</sup> But it would rather seem that these women are precedent setters, the first fruit of things to come as the culture becomes more open to women leaders.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

**D. Women in Church History.**

1. Every era has had at least one woman who stood out with a strong calling from God to either evangelize or build the church.
2. Some of the most notable men to encourage women preachers were John Wesley, Charles Finney and D.L. Moody.<sup>xi</sup>

**E. Jesus on women.** Jesus validated women by...

1. including them as disciples.
2. teaching them (when woman were not to be taught).
3. entrusting the gospel and resurrection message to them (when his male disciples forsook him and the culture didn't consider a woman's testimony valid.)<sup>xli</sup>

**F. Jesus on leadership.**

1. His disciples were not supposed to rule over others like the Gentiles did (Mt. 20:24-28).
2. Jesus set the precedent of leadership by washing his disciple's feet (John 13:1-17).<sup>xlii</sup>

Therefore leadership was *not* to be viewed in super-subordinate terms.

**G. Pentecost.** This event occurred after men and women waited for the Spirit *together* in the upper room. A new day dawned where the church mission to reach all nations was to be pursued without the rigid restrictions of past days<sup>xliii</sup>.

1. Pentecost is the fulfillment of Joel 2:28 where the Spirit is no longer for old, Jewish males but is poured out on the previously marginalized people (young, women and servants).
2. Acts 2 was "Emancipation Day" where both men *and* women experienced the in-filling of the Spirit with its accompanying gifts.<sup>xliv</sup>

**H. Paul on women.** Paul reflected this new day in his approach to women. He continued the validation and dignity of women that began with Jesus. He incorporated women into ministry while still respecting cultural limitations.

1. Galatians 3:28

- a. This passage is a general passage in regard to salvation (as traditionalists insist) but there are ramifications that follow this truth (which traditionalists deny).<sup>xlv</sup> If Gentiles and slaves, after being baptized into the faith, are able to function in leadership roles that were previously kept from them, why not women?<sup>xlvi</sup>
  - b. Paul encouraged slaves to seek their freedom if possible (1 Cor. 7:21), so too women should seek to use their giftedness if possible.
  - c. Scriptural restrictions on women should be viewed through the lens of Gal. 3:28 not vice versa.<sup>xlvii</sup>
2. I Corinthians 7:2-5- Paul calls for a truly mutual relationship between husbands and wives in regard to sexuality in a culture where men did as they pleased.
  3. I Corinthians 11:2-15- This same mutuality is stated at the end of a very disputed text (vs. 2-10)<sup>xlviii</sup> regarding submission. Note the qualifier in verse 11 "*In the Lord, however...*" seeming to set Paul's words of mutuality above his preceding words on submission.
  4. The meaning of "head" in I Corinthians 11:3 and Ephesians 5:23. If Paul wanted to refer to head as authority (as traditionalists believe)<sup>xlix</sup> there are better Greek words to do so. *Head* most often denotes the source from which something comes, not leader or authority.<sup>l</sup>

## **I. Paul on giftedness**

1. I Corinthians 12- In a letter that is giving details regarding worship, etc. it seems odd that Paul would not mention that leadership gifts are *not* for women if that were the case. To the contrary, no distinction is made.
2. Romans 12- Paul's emphasis on gift-based ministry is shown here where specifically the gifts of *teaching* and *leadership* are specifically mentioned.<sup>li</sup> There are no qualifications or restrictions regarding women.

Traditionalists would say that women who feel called into leadership over men are wrong. They have sensed a false leading.<sup>lii</sup> But this seems to put us in a potentially

precarious position of resisting the will of God if he indeed does choose to call a woman (as we have seen him do in past history).<sup>liii</sup>

**J. Cultural Factors.**<sup>liv</sup> As noted already, the cultural norms of the day expected women to be "in their place" which was under the rule of men. Paul diplomatically addressed submission by encouraging women to subject themselves to men in specific instances, yet his teaching removed the theological underpinnings of authoritarianism which he knew would lead to its eventual dismantling.<sup>lv</sup>

1. I Corinthians 14:32-35

- a. Women are called to silence because their questioning caused a nuisance due to their lack of scriptural understanding.
- b. They were not kept from participating in worship (cf. 11:5) but were expected to control themselves.<sup>lvi</sup>

2. I Timothy 2:11-14

- a. Women are *temporarily* prevented from teaching because of their lack of training in scripture.<sup>lvii</sup>
- b. Paul fears their teaching could lead others into error as Eve did when she responded to Satan without proper knowledge.<sup>lviii</sup>
- c. The situation is complicated by the spiritual/sexual overtones of the local pagan cults which is another reason to restrict women teachers for Paul.<sup>lix</sup>

I Corinthians 10:23 sums up Paul's approach to women in leadership. Yes, women in leadership is permissible. But it is not always beneficial due to cultural expectations.<sup>lx</sup>

## V. Theological Obstacles to the Traditional View

One of the foundational issues for the traditional view is the understanding of the "maleness" of God. Not that God is male but that the male gender best reflects God's nature. From this it follows that leadership should be male.<sup>lxi</sup>

- A. *Is God male?* God is neither male nor female, but Spirit.<sup>lxii</sup> He is often spoken of in masculine terms to represent his strength and protection.
- B. *Did Jesus need to be a man?* Due to cultural reasons, Jesus needed to be male in order for his message to be heard and accepted but not for any theological reasons.<sup>lxiii</sup>
- C. *Did the apostles need to be male?* As with Jesus, they too needed to be male for the sake of the message.<sup>lxiv</sup>
- D. *Is Jesus subordinate to the Father?* Traditionalists often say that female subordination is reflective of Jesus' subordination to the Father<sup>lxv</sup>. But his subordination is temporary while on earth, not permanent for all eternity.<sup>lxvi</sup>

The traditional view is not only restrictive of women's giftedness but also reflects a distorted view of the Trinity.<sup>lxvii</sup>

## VI. Logical Obstacles of the Traditional View

The practical out-workings of the traditional view is filled with inconsistencies and contradictions. Only three are mentioned here.

- A. *Are women equal or inferior?* If women are deemed equal to men then it would follow that they should be allowed the same functional roles as men. To deny function based purely on women's femaleness is to imply inferiority.<sup>lxviii</sup>
- B. *Who makes the rules?* Denominations that once ordained women are now some of the most restrictive regarding women<sup>lxix</sup>.
- C. *Where do you draw the line?* Each denomination that attempts to restrict women in leadership draws the line in a different place. Even individual churches have their own lines (i.e. women can give an announcement but can't share a testimony, etc.)<sup>lxx</sup>

## VII. Concluding Thoughts

- A. A Christian can be biblical and not embrace the traditional view of gender roles.<sup>lxxi</sup>
- B. Scriptural restrictions on women in leadership are temporary due to cultural considerations and were never intended to engrain a status quo.<sup>lxxii</sup>

- C. Current culture allows for full expression of women's freedom in Christ without their involvement in leadership causing a stumbling block.<sup>lxxiii</sup>
- D. To purposefully eliminate women from leadership is to negate the full expression of God's nature.<sup>lxxiv lxxv</sup>
- E. Imposing restrictions on women is arbitrary, not biblical, and tends to reflect a pharisaical attitude (creating or promoting laws that put heavy loads on people), not one of grace or "good news" (the gospel).
- F. Instead of perpetuating the oppression of women, men should seek to nurture and release women's giftedness regardless of the gift.<sup>lxxvi</sup>

**Conclusion:** The Bible tells us that women are created equal to men and can be gifted with leadership ability according to the ministry of the Spirit of God. History has reflected this truth and theology and logic reinforce it. Therefore it would be unethical to eliminate women from the role of pastor/elder in the church.

---

<sup>i</sup> As posed by Rebecca Groothuis, Good News for Women. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997), p. 46.

<sup>ii</sup> The most commonly cited document expressing this view is the Danvers Statement developed by the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. See especially affirmation #6 "...wives should forsake resistance to their husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership. ...[S]ome governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men."

<sup>iii</sup> David K. Clark/Robert V. Rakestraw, Readings in Christian Ethics, Vol. 2. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996) p. 333.

<sup>iv</sup> Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen in Clark/Rakestraw notes that many people fail to distinguish between types of feminism. Typically they lump them all together and dismiss them wholesale, p. 301.

<sup>v</sup> Danvers Statement, point #2.

<sup>vi</sup> John Piper and Wayne Grudem, Fifty Crucial Questions About Manhood and Womanhood, published by the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, 1992, p. 8.

<sup>vii</sup> J.I. Packer says that, "*the present-day pressure to make women presbyters owes more to secular, pragmatic, and social factors than to any regard for biblical authority....[He sees the liberal church as attempting to] baptize secular culture into Christ...*" in Christianity Today 35, no. 2 (February 11,1991): 19, "Let's Stop Making Women Presbyters."

<sup>viii</sup> J. David Pawson, Leadership is Male. (Nashville: Thomas-Nelson, 1990) p. 17.

<sup>ix</sup> Piper/Grudem, 50 Questions..., p. 10.

<sup>x</sup> James B. Hurley, Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981)p. 212.

<sup>xi</sup> Danvers Statement, point #1.

<sup>xii</sup> Kari Torjesen Malcolm, Women at the Crossroads. (Downers Grove: IVP, 1982) p. 82.

<sup>xiii</sup> Groothuis, p. 21.

<sup>xiv</sup> Except where noted, examples come from Paul K. Jewett in Man as Male and Female, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans,1975) p. 150-154.

<sup>xv</sup> As quoted by Berkeley and Alvera Mickelsen in "What Does the Bible Teach about Men-Women Relationships?".



- 
- <sup>xvi</sup> Jewett, p. 90.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether in Women and Redemption. (Mpls: Fortress, 1998) p. 95.
- <sup>xviii</sup> Jewett, p. 63.
- <sup>xix</sup> Ruether, p. 118, 120.
- <sup>xx</sup> John Knox, The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women (1558), in The Political Writings of John Knox: The First Blast of the Trumpet against the Monstrous Regiment of Women and Other Selected Works, ed. Marvin A Breslow (Washington: Folger Books, The Folger Shakespeare Library, 1985), p. 42-43.
- <sup>xxi</sup> Charles Hodge, "The Bible Argument on Slavery, " in Cotton is King, and Pro-Slavery Arguments, ed. E. N. Elliot (Augusta: Pritchard, Abbot and Loomis, 1960; repr. 1968), 863; cited in Klyne R. Snodgrass, "Galatians 3:28: Conundrum or Solution?" in Women, Authority, and the Bible, ed. Alvera Mickelsen (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP, 1986), p. 162.
- <sup>xxii</sup> Jewett, p. 131.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> *ibid*, p. 68.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> Betty A. DeBerg, Ungodly Women: Gender and The First Wave of American Fundamentalism (Mpls: Fortress, 1990), p. 46, 53.
- <sup>xxv</sup> See Jewett, p. 69, on Barth.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> Church History, Volume VII, Number 1, Issue 17: Women in the Early Church.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> DeBerg, p. 76.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> Piper/Grudem, 50 Questions..., p. 54.
- <sup>xxix</sup> See Groothuis discussion p. 61f.
- <sup>xxx</sup> Gilbert Bilezikian, Beyond Sex Roles (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985), p. 22-26.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> Consider the examples of Jacob being chosen over Esau, Joseph over Rueben, or David over all of his older brothers, etc. God seems to delight in promoting the unlikely candidate.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> Groothuis, p. 129. See also Stanley Grenz with Denise Muir Kjesbo, Women in the Church. (Downers Grove: IVP, 1995), p. 164.
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> *Ibid*. p. 128, see also Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen in Gender & Grace (Downers Grove: IVP, 1990) p. 41.
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> Thomas C. Oden in Clark/Rakestraw, p.318 notes how striking it is that when Paul lists his most esteemed partners in the gospel that so many of them are women.
- <sup>xxxv</sup> Groothuis, p. 194.
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> Piper and Grudem, 50 Questions... p. 39.
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> Groothuis notes John Chrysostom as regarding Junia as female and an apostle.
- <sup>xxxviii</sup> Thomas R. Schreiner, "The Valuable Ministries of Women in the Context of Male Leadership: A Survey of Old and New Testament Examples and Teaching," in Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, p. 126. See also Piper/Grudem in 50 Questions..., p. 29.
- <sup>xxxix</sup> Aida Besancon Spencer, Beyond the Curse: Women Called to Ministry. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1985), p. 99-100. She says, "*If even one woman could be found who was affirmed [in the Bible] as an apostle, a prophet, an evangelist, a pastor, or a teacher, then one could - one must - conclude that women have been given gifts from God for positions to which we now ordain people and for positions considered authoritative in the first-century church.*"
- <sup>xl</sup> For excellent discussions see Malcolm, p. 107-126, Ruether on Abolitionist Feminism and chapter 2 of Stanley Grenz with Denise Muir Kjesbo, Women in the Church. (Downers Grove: IVP, 1995).
- <sup>xli</sup> Grenz/Kjesbo, p. 71-77.
- <sup>xlii</sup> Gilbert Bilezikian, Beyond Sex Roles (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985) p. 107-118.
- <sup>xliii</sup> Grenz/Kjesbo note that the church structure was to be subservient to the church mission, p. 217.
- <sup>xliv</sup> Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen, p. 34,35.
- <sup>xlv</sup> Dorothy Patterson in "Southern Baptists Lead the Way" from Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, Summer 1998, vol. 3, No. 2.
- <sup>xlvi</sup> See discussion by F.F. Bruce, The Epistle to the Galatians: A Commentary on the Greek Text (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982) p. 188-190.
- <sup>xlvii</sup> Grenz/Kjesbo note that Galatians was written first of the letters and quote F.F.Bruce in saying, "*Paul states the basic principle here; if restrictions on it are found elsewhere in the Pauline corpus...they are to be understood in relation to Gal. 3:28 and not vice versa.*" from his commentary on Galatians, p. 190.
- <sup>xlviii</sup> Grenz/Kjesbo, p. 108.
- <sup>xliv</sup> Mary A. Kassian, Women, Creation and the Fall. (Westchester, Ill: Crossway, 1990) p. 95.
- <sup>1</sup> See discussion in chapter six of Mickelsen (ed.) "What does Kephale mean in the New Testament?".

---

<sup>li</sup> Groothuis, p. 74.

<sup>lii</sup> Piper/Grudem, 50 Questions..., p. 36.

<sup>liii</sup> Grenz/Kjesbo, p. 16.

<sup>liv</sup> Richard Foster in *The Celebration of Discipline* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978) p. 103, gives an interesting cultural insight regarding submission. He says, "*This Discipline of submission has been terribly misconstrued and abused from failure to see this wider context. Submission is an ethical theme that runs the gamut of the New Testament. It is a posture obligatory upon all Christians: men as well as women, fathers as well as children, masters as well as slaves. We are commanded to live a life of submission, not because we are in a particular place or station in life. Self-denial is a posture fitting those who follow the crucified Lord...the only compelling reason for submission is the example of Jesus. This single rationale for submission is staggering when we compare it to other first-century writings. In them there was a constant appeal to submission because that was the way the gods had created things; it was one's station in life. Not a single New Testament writer appeals to submission on that basis. The teaching is revolutionary. They completely ignored all the contemporary customs of super-ordinate and subordinate and called everyone to "count others better than yourselves." (Phil. 2:3)...The revolutionary thing about this teaching [Col. 3:18ff to wives, slaves and children] is that these people, to whom first-century culture afforded no choice at all are addressed as free moral agents. Paul gave personal moral responsibility to those who had no legal or moral status in their culture. He makes decision-makers of people who were forbidden to make decisions. It is astonishing that Paul called them to subordination, since they were already subordinate by virtue of their place in first-century culture. The only meaningful reason for such a command was the fact that by virtue of the gospel message they had come to see themselves as free from a subordinate status in society. The gospel had challenged all second-class citizenships and they knew it. Paul urged voluntary subordination not because it was their station in life but because it was 'fitting in the Lord' (Col. 3:18).*"

<sup>lv</sup> Grenz/Kjesbo, p. 103.

<sup>lvi</sup> See Malcolm's discussion on Kroegers study [Catherine Clark Kroeger and Richard Kroeger, "Pandemonium and Silence at Corinth," *The Reformed Journal*, June 1978, p. 10] of *sigao* (silent), *laleo* (speak) and *hupotasso* (subject) p. 74-75. The word *sigao* is used in Acts 12:17, 15:12 and 21:40 where someone should be silent to listen to another. *Laleo* can be used in Greek literature to mean not merely speech but also gossip or prattle. It is used of people who talk a lot but won't listen. So in v.34 when it tells women not to speak, it is saying that they *should "listen to the speaker and not spend their time gossiping."* Kroeger's say that the word *subject* in vss. 32 and 34 are the same and should be translated in a manner that reflects controlling oneself rather than being in submission to another. The issue here was that people were not controlling themselves and speaking whenever they wanted. It was not a "submission" issue but a self-control issue.

<sup>lvii</sup> Grenz/Kjesbo notes that the tense of Paul's command is the present active indicative rather than the imperative which would better translate "*I am not presently allowing a women to teach...*" implying temporary limitations for a specific situation that existed in Ephesus alone. It is assumed that as women are taught the scriptures that the injunction will be removed since the threat of further heresy would then not exist.

<sup>lviii</sup> Bilzekian, p. 180.

<sup>lix</sup> Grenz/Kjesbo, p. 126.

<sup>lx</sup> David K. Clark reference in class at Bethel Seminary, St. Paul, MN, November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2000.

<sup>lxi</sup> For excellent discussions on this see Jewett, p. 165f and Groothuis's chapter on "Sexuality in God and in the Image of God."

<sup>lxii</sup> Jewett, p. 68.

<sup>lxiii</sup> Grenz/Kjesbo, p. 209.

<sup>lxiv</sup> Jewett, p. 169 states it well, "...one should no more infer from this fact [maleness of apostles] that the Christian ministry must remain masculine to perpetuity than one should infer from the fact that the apostles were all Jews, that the ministry must remain Jewish to perpetuity."

<sup>lxv</sup> Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994), p.251.

<sup>lxvi</sup> Groothuis, p. 56-60.

<sup>lxvii</sup> Grenz/Kjesbo, see page 142 where they say, "*We are convinced that the question of women in ministry cannot be abandoned because it is central to the gospel. Positions taken on this issue reveal one's deeper theological understanding of fundamental vision about the nature of God, the intent of God's program in the world and who we are as the people of God.*" See also page 154 where they further discuss the Godhead.

<sup>lxviii</sup> Groothuis, p.53-55, 74, 86.

---

<sup>lxix</sup> Malcolm notes especially the Evangelical Free Church, p. 129-130. See also Grenz/Kjesbo where they note that *"Women frequently led during the early, formative years of a new church body, only to be replaced by men as the denomination 'came of age'"*. P. 53.

<sup>lxx</sup> Groothuis, p. 209.

<sup>lxxi</sup> Ibid. citing David M. Scholer, "the Evangelical Debate Over Biblical 'Headship,'" in Women, Abuse and the Bible: How Scripture Can Be Used to Hurt or to Heal, ed. Catherine Clark Kroeger and James R. Beck (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996) p. 46 says *"Probably the biggest hindrance to a productive approach to the gender debate is the perceived threat of the 'slippery slope.' Many fear that a rapid descent into a secular, liberal, or pagan feminism would be the result if evangelicals were to accept a nonhierarchical, flexible, equalitarian approach to gender relations. In view of this fear, it is crucial that we understand what is and what is not at stake in this debate ...What is at stake is the opportunity for women to pursue their callings whatever they may be, as well as the opportunity for both men and women to benefit from the full range of women's gifts and to learn from and relate to women as whole persons. What is not at stake is biblical authority, biblical morality, the integrity of the church, or the preservation of the family and civilized society."* P. 239.

<sup>lxxii</sup> Jewett, p. 148.

<sup>lxxiii</sup> Groothuis, p. 25.

<sup>lxxiv</sup> Grenz/Kjesbo say that *"a true perception of the divine nature requires the contribution of both men and women."* P. 150. They also go on to quote from Aida Besancon Spencer who says, *"If we want people to mature in God's image, it is imperative that we have women and men to model all aspects of God's nature. Women and men are needed to participate at every level of theological practice and discussion so that God's full counsel can become apparent."* From her book, Beyond the Curse: Women Called to Ministry. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1985), p. 122.

<sup>lxxv</sup> Ruth A. Tucker and Walter L. Liefied quote Finney *"the church that silences the woman is shorn of half of it's power."* Daughters of the Church (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1987) p. 252-3.

<sup>lxxvi</sup> Jewett concludes his book with these remarks based on D.S. Baileys book Sexual Relation in Christian Thought. (New Your: Harper & Bros., 1959), p. 117 *"In the past, this genuine partnership of mind and spirit between the man and the woman has been greatly hindered by theories of male superiority and domination. The woman has been excluded from many spheres of life, especially those where decisions are made. And her social and educational disabilities have deprived her of the means to refute the arguments by which the man has buttressed his position of privilege. The woman has had to compete with the man in a 'man's world', on his terms, rather than relate to him as a partner who is equal to him in every way. In view of the many obstacles she has had to face in exercising her natural fits as a female human being, her achievements are remarkable. Yet compared to the man's they are slight indeed. Little do we know what resources she has because of the stultifying effects of male supremacy...[Man needs to] renounce the prerogatives, privileges, and powers which tradition has given him in the name of male headship. And it calls for courage on the part of the woman to share the burdens and responsibilities of life with the man, that in love and humility they may together fulfill their common destiny as Man."* P. 150

## Bibliography:

1. \_ Church History, Volume VII, Number 1, Issue 17: Women in the Early Church.
2. Bilezikian, Gilbert. Beyond Sex Roles (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1985).
3. Clark, David K. & Robert V. Rakestraw, Readings in Christian Ethics, Vol. 2. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996).
4. DeBerg, Betty A. Ungodly Women: Gender and The First Wave of American Fundamentalism (Mpls: Fortress, 1990).
5. Fee, Gordon D. Gospel and Spirit: Issues in New Testament Hermeneutics, Chapter four, *The Great Watershed - Intentionality and Particularity/eternality: I Timothy 2:8-15 as a test case*. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991).
6. Groothuis, Rebecca Merrill. Good News for Women. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997).

- 
7. Grenz, Stanley with Denise Muir Kjesbo, Women in the Church. (Downers Grove: IVP, 1995).
  8. Grudem, Wayne & John Piper, Fifty Crucial Questions About Manhood and Womanhood, published by the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, 1992.
  9. Grudem, Wayne, Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, March 1998, Vol. 3, No. 1, "*An Open Letter to Egalitarians.*"
  10. Jewett, Paul. Man as Male and Female, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975).
  11. Malcolm, Kari Torjesen. Women at the Crossroads. (Downers Grove: IVP, 1982).
  12. Alvera Mickelsen (editor). Women, Authority, and the Bible, (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP, 1986).
  13. Ruether, Rosemary Radford. Women and Redemption. (Mpls: Fortress, 1998).
  14. Van Leeuwen, Mary Stewart. Gender & Grace (Downers Grove: IVP, 1990).