



The Village Church

The Role of Women at The Village Church

Our foundation for life and ministry starts with the understanding that the Bible is God's Word. As affirmed in our Statement of Basic Beliefs, "We believe the Scriptures are true, authoritative and sufficient" (Ps. 19:7-11; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21). Therefore, we believe that any attempt to understand personhood and gender must begin with divine revelation.

The Bible teaches that God created two complementary sexes of humans, male and female, to bear His image together (Gen. 1:27-28; Matt. 19:4; Mark 10:6). This distinction in gender represents an essential characteristic of personhood and reflects an essential part of being created in God's image.

As outlined in Scripture and in accordance with our Statement of Faith, we believe that men and women are absolutely equal in essence, dignity and value and are complementary by divine design. Gender does not merely represent a social construct but, instead, represents a reality present in every human from birth. Men and women are not interchangeable.

From the opening pages of Scripture, we find that God, in His wisdom and providence, created two complementary sexes for our good and His glory. In light of His good created order, and the fact that men and women both share in divine image bearing, God intends for men and women to have different yet complementary roles and responsibilities in the church and home.

These role distinctions do not arise from cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity but are an integral part of God's plan for humanity, as revealed in Scripture. We should recognize them as God's grace to men and women, protecting, preserving and practicing them for His glory, our joy and for the sake of human flourishing (Gen. 2:18-25; 1 Cor. 11:2-16, 14:33-35; Eph. 5:22-33; Col. 3:18-19; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 1 Pet. 3:1-7).

To reflect God's beautiful design as The Village Church, we desire to articulate and embody a theological vision of women in ministry, and of complementarianism, that honors the Lord and results in human flourishing. This paper seeks to describe that vision by explaining what we believe Holy Scripture teaches about gender complementarity as it relates to life and faith at The Village Church.

Contemporary Landscape of Gender Issues

Our culture appears to be at a turning point as it relates to gender and personhood. Examples of gender-related confusion abound in the contemporary landscape. Some seek to sever gender identity from biology, making gender something that is attainable or even a matter of the will. Others seek to redefine marriage as a loving union between two persons, regardless of gender. As a church, we believe that the best way to reorient our disoriented world is to root our understanding of gender in Scripture. However, that is easier said than done, because we are certainly not the first to address this conversation through the lens of Scripture. We believe the biblical text, while clear and authoritative about sexuality, is ultimately about the gospel of Jesus Christ and should be read as a means to know Christ through the Spirit. Questionable

hermeneutics not only cloud the roles of men and women but ultimately the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Theological Method and Assumptions

As a project in constructive pastoral theology, this paper employs exegetical, historical, theological and pastoral resources to build a consistent view of gender complementarity as demonstrated in Scripture and how it should be lived out in the world. At the beginning of this project, it is essential to discuss our basic assumptions: biblical authority, complementarianism and brotherly/sisterly love.

The Bible Is the Authoritative Word of God

First, we confess that Scripture is the Word of God. One of the most fundamental and astonishing claims in Christian theology is that God has made Himself known. Nicholas Wolterstorff writes, “Audacious, but common is the attribution of speech to God.”¹ It is audacious to say that God has spoken, but that is exactly the claim the Bible makes. In contrast to mute idols, the true and living God is a speaking, commanding, promising and pledging God.² Christianity is a revealed religion. The Christian tradition maintains that God has disclosed Himself and His purposes through His words and actions—more specifically, through incarnation and incription (through the person and work of Christ and the words of

¹ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim That God Speaks* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 9.

² Scott R. Swain, *Trinity, Revelation, and Reading: A Theological Introduction to the Bible and Its Interpretation* (New York: T&T Clark, 2011), 15.

Scripture).³ We agree with the *Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy* when it asserts “that the Holy Scriptures are to be received as the authoritative Word of God” and that “to stray from Scripture in faith or conduct is disloyalty to our Master. Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority.” Thus, exegesis of Scripture is of supreme importance because it is in the text that God discloses Himself, His purposes and His gospel.⁴ We confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and we believe that Scripture, in all its parts, is a testimony to Him. That means that we read Scripture in light of God’s saving purposes in the person and work of Jesus Christ, and we must give attention to Christ as He sets Himself before us, announcing the gospel to us, in Holy Scripture.

It is dangerous to mine through the Bible looking for answers to a specific set of questions that arise uniquely in the modern era. The questions we ask of the biblical text determine the kinds of answers we will get. The Bible is about God’s revelation of the salvific events that culminate in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The Scriptures have an integrity of their own that must be respected and recognized.⁵ The Bible can only be properly read through the illumination of the Holy Spirit and in accordance with God’s redemptive purposes. The Bible must be taken on its own terms.

Additionally, we are not persuaded by the arguments calling for a trajectory hermeneutic.

⁶ We confess the verbal-plenary inspiration of Scripture along with the corollary doctrine of

³ Richard Lints, *The Fabric of Theology: A Prolegomenon to Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 264.

⁴ Cf. J.B. Webster, *Holiness* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003), 3.

⁵ Cf. Lints, *The Fabric of Theology*.

⁶ The so-called trajectory hermeneutic, or redemptive movement hermeneutic, proposes that the biblical text is not properly read for static meaning, but should be read through the lens of progress, redemption or trajectories. In other words, the meaning in the text is best understood as it relates to the ethical trajectory to which it points. There are some helpful insights that the trajectory hermeneutic proposes (the difficulty of applying the biblical text today, the

biblical inerrancy, which leads us to conclude the insufficiency of the methods employed by the trajectory hermeneutic. This method of interpreting Scripture ultimately does harm to the biblical text and is lacking in comparison to a historical-grammatical approach to Scripture.

The Village Church desires to be a place where the Word of God is preached, believed and obeyed because we believe that what the Bible says, God says. John Calvin is right to say that, “No one can get even the slightest taste of right and sound doctrine unless they be a pupil of Scripture.”⁷ Because the texts are difficult we may be tempted to err on the side of caution, which can lead to overly restrictive readings. We do not want to say more or less than the biblical text. We are dependent on the Holy Spirit to illumine our darkened eyes and hearts so that we may become proper readers and interpreters of Scripture—readers who read in the way of Christ (1 Cor. 2:6-16).

Given this confession of the ontology and function of Scripture, we desire to be biblical in our explanation and practice of complementarianism. We want the pattern of our words to be in accordance with the testimony of Holy Scripture. We also want to be careful not to say more than Scripture says. One element of being biblical is to stop speaking where the Bible does. It is easy to go further than Scripture and be restrictive where the Bible does not place restrictions. We confess our need to be comfortable with mystery because the Scripture leaves room for mystery.

importance of cultural context, etc.), but we believe that it is ultimately lacking as a biblical hermeneutic. Cf. William J. Webb, *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals: Exploring the Hermeneutics of Cultural Analysis*, ed. Darrell L. Bock (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2001). For a helpful review see, Thomas R. Schreiner, “William J. Webb’s *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals*: A Review,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 6, no. 1 (2002): 46–64.

⁷ John Calvin, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 1 (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), 1.6.2.

Complementarianism

Our second assumption is that complementarianism is predominant throughout Scripture. From the opening pages of Scripture, we find that God, in His wisdom and providence, created two complementary sexes for our good and His glory. We affirm that, because both are created in God's image, men and women share more in common, as divine image bearers, than distinguishes them. Men and women are absolutely equal in essence, dignity and value. At the same time, they are complementary by divine design. Men and women correspond to one another. We believe that, in every sphere of life, male and female image bearers flourish in partnership. Where complementarity is lacking or absent, both genders suffer.⁸ The beauty of complementarity is seen in a robust congregational life. The Bible uses imagery and language to describe a vision of brothers and sisters partnering together in the kingdom of God. When we don't empower both men and women in complementarian partnership, the mission suffers.⁹ When the Great Commission of Jesus Christ is central to the church, we will see both men and women making disciples of all nations.

At The Village Church, we believe that Scripture intends for both men and women to be equally involved and engaged in ministry and society. Being equally involved in ministry does not entail being interchangeably involved. We believe the Bible reserves the office of

⁸ At first glance it may appear that there are roles, situations or contexts in which a single person, or a group of people of the same gender, are not in complementary relationship with the other sex. For example, Christian brothers and sisters who are single appear to not be in complementary relationships. However, we would point to the local church as a congregation, a family, composed of brothers and sisters in complementarian relationship. Thus, the local church, and membership in it, becomes another picture of complementarity. Further, it could appear that the office of elder, since it is reserved for men, is lacking in complementarian partnership. In this instance, we would believe that since the office of elder is reserved for men, it is essential for these men to seek out formal and informal channels of input from their sisters.

⁹ Both men and women play an essential role in partnering together to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to all nations (Matt. 28). In order for the gospel to go to all nations, both men and women must be taught and they must teach.

elder/pastor specifically for qualified men. Scripture calls elders to lead the church (1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:1-2), preach the Word (1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:9), protect the church from false teaching (Acts 20:17, 28-31; Titus 1:9) pray for and visit the sick (Jas. 5:14; Acts 20:35), equip the saints for ministry (Eph. 4:11-12) and use proper judgment in theological and doctrinal matters (Acts 15). In shepherding, overseeing, leading, caring for and praying for the local church, elders practice sacrificial male headship.

Apart from the role of pastor/elder, we believe the Bible explicitly encourages and assumes that women will be involved in the ministry of the church. It is clear from Paul's words to Titus that older women teaching biblical wisdom to younger women is a noble, beautiful and necessary task (Titus 2:3-5). Phoebe, a patron and deacon of the church of Cenchreae, is commended by Paul and was likely the courier for Paul's epistle to the Romans, indicating her participation in gospel ministry (Rom. 16:1-2). Acts 18:26 describes Priscilla as "explaining the way of God more accurately" to Apollos.

We celebrate the biblical picture of men and women serving the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ together. We rejoice in biblical examples of men and women using their gifts in the Church for the glory of God. The Village Church desires to be a place that embodies a beautiful complementarian vision of ministry so that both sexes, young and old, will flourish.

Brotherly and Sisterly Love

Our third and final assumption relates to the Christian posture of brotherly and sisterly love. At the heart of the Christian ethic is a disposition of love. This ethic ought to permeate all relationships within the Church. One of the consistent commands in the New Testament is to

love one another with a brotherly/sisterly love. This is a concept that is unique to the Christian tradition.¹⁰ The word consistently used by several authors is (φ ι λ α δ ε λ φ ι α), which means “the sense of love that is reserved for blood brothers and sisters.”¹¹ Christians should see themselves as a family in a special sense. Consider the following exhortations to a familial type of love that characterized the early Church. Paul, writing to the Roman Christians, exhorts them to, “Love one another with brotherly affection (φ ι λ α δ ε λ φ ι α). Outdo one another in showing honor” (Rom. 12:10). Writing to the Thessalonians, he maintains, “Now concerning brotherly love (φ ι λ α δ ε λ φ ι α) you have no need for anyone to write to you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another” (1 Thess. 4:9). The author of Hebrews contends, “Let brotherly love (φ ι λ α δ ε λ φ ι α) continue” (Heb. 13:1). Peter encourages Christians to continue to pursue “godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection (φ ι λ α δ ε λ φ ι α) with love” (2 Pet. 1:7). We affirm that cultivating an environment of brotherly and sisterly love is at the heart of complementarianism. The predominant relationship in the Church between men and women is the relationship of brothers and sisters, not subordinates. These relationships should be marked by honor, care and sacrifice for one another.

Exegesis of Primary Passages

The goal of the following exegetical section(s) is not to provide an entire biblical theology of complementarianism. Rather, it is to consider some of the key passages where

¹⁰ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 444. Morris asserts, “The idea of *brotherly love* is not found anywhere but among the Christians...God was their Father and they were all brothers and sisters. Therefore they were united in a love that other people saw only in those of a natural family.” Ibid.

¹¹ Walter Bauer and Frederick William Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 1055.

complementarity is addressed in Holy Scripture. The texts that will be addressed are as follows: Genesis 1:26-28, Genesis 2:18-25, Genesis 3:14-19, Romans 16:1-16, 1 Corinthians 11:1-16, 1 Corinthians 14:26-40 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15.¹²

Genesis 1:26-28

The opening pages of Scripture present the reader with a glorious picture of the Creator God and His creation.¹³ God creates all things and pronounces them good. The creation narrative demonstrates that God takes what was disorderly and creates order.¹⁴

Verse 26 states, “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.’” Genesis 1:26-28 places a primary emphasis on the fact that humanity is the purpose and end of the whole work of creation. In contrast to the command, “Let there be...” common to the first five days of creation, God says, “let us make” at the creation of humankind, indicating the unique, personal nature of this final creative act.

Man (אָדָם) is used here to refer not to an individual specifically but all of humanity.¹⁵ The pinnacle of God’s creation are those who bear His image. Because they are created in the image of God, humans correspond more closely to Him than any other creature.¹⁶ No other

¹² Our aim is not to consider each passage exhaustively. Rather, specific attention will be given to language and themes that relate directly to complementarian theology and practice.

¹³ For a brief but helpful article on the structure, plot and theology of Genesis, see L.A. Turner’s “Book of Genesis,” ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David Baker, W., *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 357.

¹⁵ Kenneth Mathews, *The New American Commentary: Genesis 1- 11:26* (Nashville: Holman, 1996), 174.

¹⁶ Michael F. Bird, *Evangelical Theology: A Biblical and Systematic Introduction* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 658–660. Bird notes that there has been no lack of discussion as to what exactly it means to be created in the image of God. Several views have been put forth. First, the substantive view indicates that image bearers share in divine capacities (rationality, reflection, moral discourse, etc.). Second, the relational view maintains that to be created in the image of God means to share in God’s relational capacity. Third, the functional view asserts that to be created in

creatures, not even angels, were created in God’s image. God created all of humanity—male and female—in His likeness.¹⁷ Humans, therefore, are distinguished from all of the rest of creation. Humans are not compared to other creatures of the same sex, because there are no other creatures to which humans may be compared. Rather, humanity, male and female, is compared to God Himself.¹⁸ Christian anthropology does not begin in Genesis 3 with the Fall but begins in the Garden of Eden, as both male and female were created to be God’s representatives to all of creation.

One of the primary purposes of humanity is announced in verse 26: Image bearers are to “have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” God creates humanity in His image for the express purpose that they should fill, subdue and have dominion over the earth.¹⁹ The task given in the cultural mandate cannot be fulfilled by one sex, male or female, but can only be fulfilled by means of both sexes in a complementary relationship. Humanity, both male and female, in this passage bears God’s image and represents God to all of creation. Neither man nor woman can execute this task without the other. The Bible teaches that Adam and Eve are endowed with a priestly status that enables them to serve in the temple-garden and enjoy direct access to God. Those created in the *imago dei* possess a “royal vocation that

the image of God means to exercise dominion over creation. Finally, the royal view is a variation of the functional view, which maintains that to be created in God’s image is to be created to rule.

¹⁷ A full theological presentation of the *imago dei* is outside the scope of this paper. However, two important works for further consultation and consideration on the *imago dei* are: Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994); Richard Lints, *Identity and Idolatry: The Image of God and Its Inversion* (IVP, 2015).

¹⁸ Eugene Merrill, “Image of God,” *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003), 443.

¹⁹ Herman Bavinck, *Our Reasonable Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1956), 215.

reflects the reign of God in their stewardship over creation.”²⁰ They are appointed as God’s vice regents to govern the earth on His behalf.²¹ Humanity is meant to rule over the creation so that God’s reputation and glory are spread throughout all of His creation.²² Note that God grants the ability to rule collectively to both male and female. In other words, an inherent authority is given to both men and women.²³

Verse 27 notes, “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.” This passage affirms the distinct sexes of God’s image bearers. God created His image bearers to be male (אָדָם) and female (נְקֵבָה). Though sex distinctions would have been part of the lower orders of creation, they receive no emphasis in the account until the creation of humanity.²⁴ Genesis 1:27 takes pains to express that God created humankind as male and female. Each individual, male or female, is created in the image of God, and humanity cannot bear God’s image to the next generation apart from the contributions of

²⁰ Bird, *Evangelical Theology*, 661. Of course, it is essential to point out that the *imago dei* cannot be separated from Christology. F. F. Bruce notes, “Jesus Christ is the one who is both the perfect image of God and the perfect image of man. To say that Christ is the image of God is to say that in him the nature and being of God have been perfectly revealed – that in him the invisible has become visible.” F. F. Bruce, *The Epistles to the Colossians, to Philemon, and to the Ephesians*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 57–58.

²¹ T. Desmond Alexander, *From Eden to the New Jerusalem: An Introduction to Biblical Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2009), 76. Cf. T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2012), 125.

²² Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2014), 34.

²³ Bruce K. Waltke, “Revisiting Inspiration and Incarnation,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 71, no. 1 (March 1, 2009): 218.

²⁴ John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 95.

both sexes.²⁵ When human sexuality is distorted, overlooked or seen as interchangeable, the image of God in the human family suffers, and consequently, so does the human family.²⁶

Verse 28 expands on the cultural mandate that God gives to humanity. They are called to, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” The man and the woman are told to “Edenize” all of God’s creation. This commission is not given to the man alone or to the woman alone: It is given equally to both. Neither male nor female can fulfill God’s mandate by themselves—they must depend on each other in complementarity. Mathews maintains, “The commissioning of man and woman to reign over the good land (1:28) involves procreation, and only together can they achieve their destiny. This unity, however, is not merely sexual; it involves sharing spiritual, intellectual, and emotional dimensions as well.”²⁷ God’s design for humanity, to be vice regents taking dominion over all creation, cannot be accomplished by only one of the sexes.²⁸ Both men and women (אָדָם) are equally involved, though in separate roles, in the mandate to subdue creation. The concept of humanity taking dominion, or subduing creation, connotes a royal figure representing God as His appointed ruler. In other words, all humans, not just kings and queens, have the special status of royalty in God’s

²⁵ Bruce K. Waltke and Charles Yu, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Zondervan, 2007), 221. Waltke goes on to indicate that this reality indicates that neither sex is ontologically superior to the other.

²⁶ Mathews, *The New American Commentary*, 174.

²⁷ Mathews, *The New American Commentary*, 213.

²⁸ For a helpful resource on a biblical theology of dominion and dynasty see, Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A Biblical Theology of the Hebrew Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2003).

eyes.²⁹ The proper role of both sexes in this mandate is crucial for God's design for human life and prosperity.

This means there is no place in God's created order for unisexuality or for any diminishing or confusion of sexual identity. Human sexuality in Genesis is sacred in the creative purposes of God, and it is essential for carrying out the cultural mandate (cf. 9:1, 7; 12:1-3; 26:24; 28:3-4).³⁰ Genesis 1 affirms that sexuality is not an accident of nature, not a biological phenomenon; rather, it is a gift of God.

Genesis 2:18-25

The second text this paper will consider is Genesis 2:18-25. Upon completion of His creation, God pronounces everything that He has created to be good, except for one thing: The man does not have a suitable companion. Genesis 2:18 asserts, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him." Mathews notes, "The Hebrew construction of v. 18 accentuates the negative phrase 'not good' by placing it at the head of the sentence."³¹ Even in this idyllic setting, man is in need of a complementary partner, showing that even in the best of circumstances, even in the garden, man and woman are in deep need of each other. God gives to man a "helper" (עֲזָרָה) in Genesis 2:18.³² There is no sense derived from the word linguistically or from the context of the garden narrative that the woman is a lesser person because her role

²⁹ Mathews, *The New American Commentary*, 213.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 173–74.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 213.

³² This term is masculine in gender, but here is used to refer to a woman. Any suggestion that this word denotes subordination is refuted by the fact that most frequently the same word describes Yahweh's relationship to Israel.

differs.³³ Some readers believe that a “helper” implies subordination, but this stands in contradiction to how this word is used elsewhere in Scripture.³⁴ This word is primarily used to describe Yahweh's relationship to Israel because He is Israel's helper (Exod. 18:4; Deut. 33:7, 26, 29; Ps. 33:20; 115:9-11; 124:8; 145:5). This narrative tells us that the woman is man's indispensable partner, a necessary ally. Mathews states, “What the man lacks, the woman accomplishes.”³⁵ Some scholars have pointed out that the term “helper” in 2:18 anticipates, in a rather unexpected way, how the woman will be a “helper” to her husband: Through her seed, she will be instrumental in providing salvation for fallen Adam.³⁶ This interpretation draws strength from a fascinating wordplay between the Hebrew word for “seed” (זָרַעַה) in Genesis 3:15 and the similar sounding “helper” (עֲזָרָה).

It is also important to point out that man's helper is “fit” for him, which indicates a correspondence between the man and the woman. Mathews points out, “Man and woman share ‘human’ sameness that cannot be found elsewhere in creation among the beasts. In every way, the woman shares in the same features of personhood as that of the man.”³⁷ The “likeness” that the man and the woman share with God in chapter 1 finds an analogy in the “likeness” between the man and his wife in chapter 2.³⁸ Because of this, any biblical description of complementarity must emphasize both what men and women share in common, and what distinguishes them.

³³ Mathews, *The New American Commentary*, 215.

³⁴ Tremper Longman, *Genesis*, ed. Scot McKnight, *The Story of God Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2016), 50.

³⁵ Mathews, *The New American Commentary*, 213.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 214.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 213.

³⁸ Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 102.

Verses 19-20 explore the similarity and dissimilarity between humanity and the animals. As Adam takes dominion over the animals by naming them, “no suitable helper was found.” This distinguishes image bearers from the animal kingdom in God’s created order. In verses 21-22, the man is put into a deep sleep, and the woman is fashioned out of the side of man. It is fascinating to note that none of Israel’s neighbors had a tradition involving a separate account of the creation of the female.³⁹ The text notes that God took one of the “sides” (צלע), often translated “rib,” of man. The better translation is “side.” The woman was taken from the man’s side to show that she was of the same substance as the man and to underscore the unity of the human family, having one source.⁴⁰ This “from-the-side” creation brilliantly depicts the relationship between the man and the wife. Cassuto notes, “Just as the rib is found at the side of the man and is attached to him, even so the good wife, the rib of her husband, stands at his side to be his helper-counterpart, and her soul is bound up with his.”⁴¹ Matthew Henry’s comments on the text are instructive: “Not made out of his head to top him, not out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.”⁴² The Hebrew word for “made” (בָּנָה) reminds the reader that God is the Creator of all created things. What God is building in this text is a perfect, harmonious, side-by-side marriage relationship between the man and the woman.

³⁹ Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis (New International Commentary on the Old Testament Series) 1-17* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 177.

⁴⁰ Mathews, *The New American Commentary*, 216.

⁴¹ Umberto Cassuto, *From Adam to Noah: A Commentary on the Book of Genesis I- VI*, 3rd ed. (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1961), 134.

⁴² Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994), 10.

In verse 23, the words of a human being are recorded for the first time in Scripture. The man exclaims in poetic fashion, “This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” The first human utterance is a hymn that beautifully describes the unique compatibility of man and woman. The phrase “this at last is” voices the resolution of the man's loneliness. His exclamation shows that he and the woman share the same substance, and therefore the same source. Mathews asserts, “Adam’s response centers on the sameness that he and the woman share as opposed to the creatures.”⁴³ The man recognized his own likeness in the woman.⁴⁴ This poetic formula demonstrates the equality of man and woman as it relates to their humanity and their distinctness from the animals.

Some commentators have also pointed out that not only should this poem be read as a statement of origin but also of loyalty. Hamilton maintains that this is “a covenantal statement of his commitment to her. Thus it would serve as the biblical counterpart to a modern marriage ceremony.”⁴⁵ Mathews agreed, stating, “The expression refers to covenant loyalty, in which case Adam is expressing a covenant commitment.”⁴⁶ In identifying her as “woman,” the man also identifies himself as “man” (אִישׁ), restating his own identity. Though they are equal in nature, this text shows that the man and the woman in the garden are distinct.

In light of this commitment to one another, verse 24 states, “...a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” Some commentators have brought attention to the puzzling fact that, in this patriarchal society, the man is the one

⁴³ Mathews, *The New American Commentary*, 218–19.

⁴⁴ Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 102.

⁴⁵ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis (New International Commentary on the Old Testament Series) 1-17*, 180.

⁴⁶ Mathews, *The New American Commentary*, 219.

who leaves his home rather than the woman.⁴⁷ Others have noted that the most crucial element in this verse is found in the two verbs it uses: “leaves” (בָּרַח) and “hold fast” (קָבַץ). The verb “leave” is frequently used to describe Israel's rejection of her covenant relationship with Yahweh (Jer. 1:16; 2:13, 17, 19; 5:7; 16:11; 17:13; 19:4; 22:19). In contrast, the verb “hold fast” is often used to describe the maintenance of the covenant relationship (Deut. 4:4; 10:20; 11:22; 13:5; 30:20). This indicates the unique relationship that the man and the woman are designed for that foreshadows Christ's relationship with His Church. The man and the woman become one flesh and leave their previous family commitments (father and mother) for loyalty to one another. Verse 24 pinpoints the inherent solidarity in marriage between one man and one woman.⁴⁸

Chapter 2 ends in verse 25, a verse that indicates the kind of relationship that the pre-fallen man and woman enjoyed: “The man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.” In the Old Testament, the term for “naked” (עָרַם) is most often linked with some form of humiliation.⁴⁹ Mathews maintains, “Nakedness among the Hebrews was shameful because it was often associated with guilt.”⁵⁰ Genesis 2:25 is an exception because it uses the term positively. This shows how differently man and woman were able to relate to one another before the Fall. It is remarkable that this first couple could be naked without embarrassment and shame. Further, the man and the woman delight in their nakedness and their physical differences.

⁴⁷ Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis*, Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster John Knox, 1973), 85.

⁴⁸ Gordon John Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, ed. John D. W. Watts and Ralph P. Martin, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2014), 181.

⁴⁹ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis (New International Commentary on the Old Testament Series) 1-17*, 181. Cf. (1) as a description of the poor (Job 24:7, 10; 31:19; Ezek. 18:16); (2) as a sign of shame or guilt (Gen. 3:7, 10, 11; Ezek. 16:22, 37, 39; Hos. 2:3; Amos 2:16; Mic. 1:8); (3) in reference to birth (Job 1:21; Eccl. 5:15).

⁵⁰ Mathews, *The New American Commentary*, 225.

The garden paradise that God has built is now complete with the presence of image bearers—male and female—who have an intimate and congruous marriage.⁵¹ In this we see complementarity before the Fall. In Adam, there are indications of male headship indicated by his naming of the animals and recognition of Eve as his human counterpart who shares in image bearing.⁵² In Eve, we see a woman who is given to Adam as a helper and who will be given the responsibility of childbearing. By virtue of biology, the man’s physical dominance presents him as a protector, and the woman’s biology marks her as a life-giver. Genesis 2 depicts the ideal of marriage as it was understood by ancient Israel and the goal to which Israel hoped to return when the promises to Abraham were fulfilled.⁵³

Genesis 3:14-19

Genesis 3 marks a transition from the perfect and ordered relationship that humans have with God (Gen. 1:31; 2:15-17) and with each other (Gen. 2:23-25) to a situation of disorder in which they accuse each other and God (Gen. 3:12) and are in conflict with the rest of creation (Gen. 3:15, 17-19). As a result, their relationships will now be marked by pain and domination

⁵¹ Cf. Longman, *Genesis*, 39. Longman further states, “Genesis 1 – 2 informs the reader that gender and sexuality are part of the creation, not part of the Creator. God may not be described as male or female. We have seen that men and women are created in the image of God, showing that both genders reflect the divine glory. In keeping with biblical practice, we should refer to God as ‘He,’ but not as male.” Ibid.

⁵² It is important to point out Adam’s headship before the Fall because we do not believe that headship is a result of the Fall. Schreiner points to six indications that Adam had the special status of head before the Fall. 1) God created Adam first, then Eve. 2) God gave Adam the command to not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. 3) God created Eve to be a helper for Adam. 4) Adam exercised his leadership by naming the creature God formed out of Adam’s rib “woman.” 5) The serpent subverted God’s pattern of leadership by tempting Eve rather than Adam. 6) God approached Adam first after the couple had sinned, even though Eve sinned first. As Schreiner notes, he is not suggesting that every one of these arguments has equal weight or clarity, but that taken as a whole there are indications of male headship before the Fall. Cf. Stanley N. Gundry et al., *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, ed. James R. Beck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 289.

⁵³ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 1:69.

(Gen 3:16).⁵⁴ The stark contrast between the first two chapters and the third chapter of Genesis cannot be overstated. Specifically, this paper will focus on how the primal sin of the first humans impacted their relationship with each other, with God and with the rest of creation. At the heart of Genesis 3 is the account of how the human couple willfully abandoned their principal duties as priestly vice regents.⁵⁵

The events of Genesis 3 are critical for understanding the overarching biblical narrative. Genesis 3:1 opens with a surprising encounter with a serpent. Mathews notes, “The serpent is unforeseen in the narrative and appears suddenly.”⁵⁶ One of Adam and Eve’s primary responsibilities was to guard the sanctity of the garden. G.K. Beale maintains, “When Adam failed to guard the Temple by sinning and letting a foul serpent defile the sanctuary, he lost his priestly role, and the cherubim took the responsibility of guarding the garden temple.”⁵⁷ The serpent intentionally distorts God’s word as he works to deceive the woman. Instead of banishing the serpent, the first couple obeys one of the creatures that they were meant to rule over. Humanity was supposed to be God’s obedient servants, maintaining both the physical and spiritual welfare of the garden, which included keeping evil influences from invading the sanctuary.⁵⁸ Rather than taking dominion over the creation, one of the creatures takes dominion over the vice regents.

⁵⁴ Turner, “Book of Genesis,” 357.

⁵⁵ Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land*, 127.

⁵⁶ Mathews, *The New American Commentary*, 232.

⁵⁷ G.K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission: A Biblical Theology of the Dwelling Place of God* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP Academic, 2004), 17.

⁵⁸ G.K. Beale, *A New Testament Biblical Theology: The Unfolding of the Old Testament in the New* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 32.

When confronted by the satanic serpent, Adam's wife responds by quoting Genesis 2:16-17 but changes the words, indicating she either failed to remember God's word or intentionally changed it for her own purposes.⁵⁹ The Bible's first recorded sin is found in Genesis 3:6. The event is recorded with these words: "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate." Later biblical revelation indicates that Eve failed because she was deceived (1 Tim. 2:14), however, no explanation is given for Adam's decision to eat. Though Adam was not deceived, he is certainly held responsible for sinning against God. The Bible places the blame for the primal sin on Adam (Rom. 5:17). It is enough to say that both the man and the woman fall headlong into ruin and destruction by being disobedient to God's commands and seeking to rise above the limitations imposed upon them by their Creator.⁶⁰

Verses 8-13 contain an intense conversation between God and the human couple. In verses 14-19, the Bible describes the consequences of their transgression. It should be noted that neither the man nor the woman are cursed: only the serpent (v. 14) and the soil (v. 17) are cursed because of sin.⁶¹ Verses 14 and 15 describe the judgment of the serpent. Verse 15 in particular is one of the most well-known verses in all of Scripture. Here, God tells the serpent about a judgment and a promise. First, the serpent is banned and is commanded to crawl: He is under judgment. Second, he is promised that some member of the human race will one day crush him: He is promised that he will be destroyed. Specifically, his destruction will come through this

⁵⁹ Cf. Allen P. Ross, *Creation and Blessing: A Guide to the Study and Exposition of Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1997), 134–35.

⁶⁰ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis (New International Commentary on the Old Testament Series) 1-17*, 190.

⁶¹ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 1:81.

seed (עֲרֵב) of the woman, namely Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:16; 1 Tim. 2:15).⁶² Jesus Christ is the One, who through His life, death, burial and resurrection has accomplished God's final and decisive victory.⁶³ All of God's enemies will be put under His feet (1 Cor. 15:25), and He comes as the skull-crushing seed of the woman who triumphs over the serpent. Revelation 20:2 confirms that the "ancient serpent" is destroyed by God because he has been a deceiver of the nations.

The verses immediately following (vv. 3:16-19) describe the serious consequences of sin for humanity—specifically their relationship to God and one another. Verse 16 highlights the consequences for the woman, first as she relates to childbirth and her children, and then to her husband.⁶⁴ Interestingly, unlike the sentences announced against the serpent and the man, there is no occurrence of "curse" related to the woman's suffering.⁶⁵ Additionally, there is no cause specified for her suffering. The serpent is charged with deception (v. 14), and the man is charged with disobedience (v. 17). Mathews contends that, "This is due to the woman's culpability through deception, in contrast with the willful rebellion of the serpent and man."⁶⁶ In other words, the man was willfully rebellious, but the woman's rebellion came through her deception (1 Tim. 2:14). Therefore, Adam's action condemned the human family, but Eve will play a critical role in liberating humanity from sin's consequences. As noted in the previous verse, the

⁶² There has been some academic debate as to whether this seed refers to a collective group of people or to a specific descendant. The storyline of the Bible points to Jesus Christ as the offspring predicted here. Failing to see the messianic prophecy contained in Genesis 3:15 does not do proper justice to the text, or to the storyline of Scripture. Cf. Thomas R. Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013), 10.

⁶³ For a helpful article on a biblical-theological perspective on the use of the term "seed" throughout Scripture, see T. Desmond Alexander, "Seed," ed. Brian S. Rosner et al., *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000).

⁶⁴ Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 108.

⁶⁵ Mathews, *The New American Commentary*, 248.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

final cosmic conflict will be humanity's victory by virtue of the woman's role as child bearer.⁶⁷

The punishment for the woman also entails a future salvation (v. 15). The future salvation will come, but it will not come without pain and discomfort.⁶⁸

Verse 16 notes two primary consequences of the woman's actions: pain in childbearing and conflict with her husband.⁶⁹ Though the previous verse sounded a positive note on the seed of the woman who will strike the serpent's head, this verse is a reminder that the coming of this seed will not be without pain.⁷⁰ Her penalty stresses the "painful labor" (עֲצָבוֹן) she must endure in childbirth, but the punishment also nurtures hope, since it assumes that she will in fact live to bear children.⁷¹ Painful childbirth signals hope but also serves as a perpetual reminder both of sin and of the woman's part in it.⁷² It signals hope because the final victory will come through the seed of the woman, and it is the means through which the serpent will be defeated and blessing will be restored. A role intended to be a source of fulfillment will now be a source of suffering.

Additionally, the woman's sin will impact her relationship with her husband. The word "desire" (רָשָׁה) occurs two other places in Scripture (Gen. 4:7; Song of Sol. 7:11) and its meaning in Genesis 3 is highly disputed. Here are some possible interpretations: 1) It may refer to sexual satisfaction of the female; 2) it may mean that despite the discomforts and pain of

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ M.D. Gow, "Fall," ed. T. Desmond Alexander and David Baker, W., *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2003), 291.

⁶⁹ One difficulty that is noted by virtually all scholars who study this verse is the question of whether this is descriptive or prescriptive. In other words, are these negative consequences engineered directly by God, or is God simply informing the woman of the way things will be from this moment on.

⁷⁰ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis (New International Commentary on the Old Testament Series) 1-17*, 200.

⁷¹ Mathews, *The New American Commentary*, 250.

⁷² Ibid. Mathews further maintains, "By procreation the blessing for the human couple will be realized, and ironically the blessing is assured in the divine pronouncement of the penalty. By this unexpected twist the vehicle of her vindication (i.e., labor) trumpets her need for the deliverance she bears (cp. 1 Cor. 11:12)." Ibid.

childbearing, the woman will still long for sexual activity; 3) it may describe a new social reality in which the woman will seek to rule over her husband.⁷³ The word is only used two other times in Scripture. In Genesis 4:7, the word describes sin's attempt to control or dominate Cain. In Song of Solomon 7:11, the word describes a desire of a sexual nature. Some interpreters, basing their understanding of the word in Song of Solomon, believe that this passage is talking about sexual desire due to the reference to childbirth in Genesis 3:15. This interpretation reads that, despite her painful experience in childbirth, she will still have sexual desires for her husband.⁷⁴ Others believe that the word has a broader meaning, which would include the woman's desire to rule or master her husband. It is most likely that the clear meaning in 4:7 helps the reader understand the less clear meaning of 3:16. Kidner comments, "She will have a desire to dominate or master her husband."⁷⁵ Instead of flourishing in their roles of headship and helper, each will attempt to rule each other. As Kidner states, "to love and to cherish becomes to desire and to dominate."⁷⁶

Not only will she have a desire to dominate, but her husband will "rule" over her. It is important to understand this as the descriptive, not prescriptive. This is not simply a repetition of Adam's role of headship as described in Genesis 1-2; it is describing a new element of the relationship that results from the Fall. The man will relate to his wife in a way that could be characterized by harsh, exploitative subjugation.⁷⁷ Hamilton describes the verse this way:

⁷³ Cf. Gow, "Fall," 289.

⁷⁴ In this interpretation, it is important to note that, despite her pain in childbirth, she will still have sexual desires for her husband, and the blessing of procreation will continue despite her potential reluctance due to the pain of childbirth.

⁷⁵ Derek Kidner, *Genesis* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP, 2008), 71.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 289.

⁷⁷ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 1:81.

It means a desire to break the relationship of equality and turn it into a relationship of servitude and domination. The sinful husband will try to be a tyrant over his wife. Far from being a reign of co-equals over the remainder of God's creation, the relationship now becomes a fierce dispute, each party trying to rule the other. The two who once reigned as one attempt to rule each other.⁷⁸

Note the sense of reciprocity. The man and woman were ordained to rule God's creation together, but in a fallen world, they will try instead to rule each other. Instead of taking dominion over God's creation, they will try to dominate one another. This text is describing how things should not be; this is the broken world with broken relationships.⁷⁹

God's final word is directed to the man in verses 17-19. Since Adam's role was related to cultivating the garden, he will now suffer in his role. The "good land" provided by the Creator in chapters 1-2 is now cursed. The man will suffer lifelong in toilsome labor (vv. 17-18) followed by death, which is the reversal of the creation process (vv. 1:19; 2:7).⁸⁰ The man's sin was that he ate (vv. 3:6, 12), and the judgment matches the sin.⁸¹ The curse on the land is meant to show the contrast between the condition of the land before and after the Fall. Because the man sinned at the point of eating, now he will be judged by having difficulty in producing food.⁸² The world experienced decay, not due to any failure on its part, but because of God's condemnation of the sin of Adam. However, creation looks to the prospects of redemption that will be realized by it

⁷⁸ Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis (New International Commentary on the Old Testament Series) 1-17*, 202.

⁷⁹ David J. Atkinson, *The Message of Genesis 1--11* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1990), 94.

⁸⁰ Mathews, *The New American Commentary*, 252.

⁸¹ Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, 108. Throughout chapters 2 and 3, the text discusses man's relationship with his Creator through the theme of eating. God's blessing and provision for the man are noted in the words, "from all the trees of the garden you may freely eat" (2:16). Then, in chapter 3, the serpent raises questions about God's goodness through the theme of eating. Finally, humanity's rebellion comes through eating. Therefore, the judgment on man is that the ground from which he freely ate will now be cursed.

⁸² Gow, "Fall," 290.

and the saints at the advent of Christ's glory. Both the creation and the "children of God" groan as with birth pangs (Gen. 3:15-16) for the dawning of the new era (Rom. 8:22-24).⁸³

The stark contrast between the scenes in Genesis 1-2 and Genesis 3 is stunning. These chapters contrast the high status and function of sinless humanity pre-Fall to the shattered status and function of sinful humanity post-Fall. This disobedience by Adam and Eve brought expulsion from the garden, separation from God and eventually death.⁸⁴ Human beings, both male and female, were to rule the world as God's vice regents, but now, both they and the world have been blighted by sin.⁸⁵ The curse, judgments and consequences touch every aspect of human life: humanity's relationship with God, with one another, birth and death, work and food. Death encroached on every area of life, and disorder reigns supreme.

Romans 16:1-16

As Paul concludes his correspondence to the church in Rome, he includes a note of personal greetings in which the reader catches a glimpse of his missionary theology. He commences the final chapter with a commendation for Phoebe.⁸⁶ Verse 1 states, "I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a servant of the church at Cenchreae."⁸⁷ Doug Moo points out that, "People who were traveling in an age with few public facilities often depended on the assistance

⁸³ Mathews, *The New American Commentary*, 263.

⁸⁴ Andrew E. Hill and John H. Walton, *A Survey of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2000), 69.

⁸⁵ Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty*, 10.

⁸⁶ Letters of recommendation such as this were commonly used in the first-century Roman empire. People did a good deal of traveling and often used letters of commendation to acquire accommodations. There are references to letters of commendation in the New Testament (cf. Acts 18:27; 2 Cor. 3:1; 8:18-24; 3 John 9-10).

⁸⁷ The verb "to commend" ($\Sigma \upsilon \nu \iota \sigma \tau \eta \mu \iota$) means, "to bring together as friends or in a trusting relationship by commending/recommending, someone to someone else." Bauer and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 972.

of people they had never met; and this assistance was easier to be had if the traveler could produce a letter of introduction from someone known to the potential host.”⁸⁸ So, Paul writes to commend Phoebe to the Roman Christians so that they might offer her hospitality.⁸⁹ Phoebe (Φοίβη) is a Gentile Christian from Cenchreae.⁹⁰ It is worth noting that Paul uses the phrase “our sister” (τῆν ἀδελφὴν ἡμῶν), which indicates that she is a fellow believer and part of the Church family. Additionally, the term “sister” relays an intimacy and warmth characterizing the early Church. The relationship between family members describes most appropriately the affiliation between Christians, both in Paul’s day and in ours.⁹¹ All believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are a family.

Paul would likely have had ample opportunity to get to know Phoebe well because Cenchreae is only eight miles from Corinth, where Paul spent over a year at one point (Acts 18:1-18) and is now staying as he writes to the Romans.⁹² C.E.B. Cranfield notes that in light of this commendation, “It is highly probable that Phoebe was to be the bearer of Paul’s letter to Rome.”⁹³ Tom Schreiner agrees, noting, “Phoebe was probably the bearer of the letter, as some of the ancient subscriptions in the letter indicate.”⁹⁴ Robert Mounce agrees with Schreiner and

⁸⁸ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 913.

⁸⁹ The Christians were noted for their hospitality, and letters of recommendation were necessary as a way of guarding against fraud. Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 528.

⁹⁰ Her Gentile background is inferred by her name, which is taken from Greek mythology. It is highly unlikely that a Jewess would have a name derived from Greek mythology. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 913.

⁹¹ Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998), 786.

⁹² Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 913.

⁹³ C.E.B. Cranfield, *Romans 9-16* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 2004), 780.

⁹⁴ Schreiner, *Romans*, 786.

Cranfield, stating his conclusion definitively: “Phoebe is undoubtedly the person carrying Paul’s letter to the church at Rome.”⁹⁵

Not only is Phoebe called a sister, indicating the familial nature of Christian relationships, and designated the bearer of the letter to Rome, she is also a “deacon” (δ ι ἀκ ο ν ο ν) of the church in Cenchreae. This term presents something of a challenge for translators and interpreters. The term deacon may be generic, denoting various kinds of assistance. On the other hand, the term may denote an office (cf. Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:8, 12). So, is Paul commending Phoebe as an official deacon, who held an office, or because she served the church at Cenchreae in a variety of unofficial ways? It is impossible to be absolutely positive, but it is likely that she actually held the office of deacon. Cranfield maintains that it is much more natural “to understand it as referring to a definite office.”⁹⁶ Schreiner agrees that Phoebe likely held the official office of deacon for several reasons. First, 1 Timothy 3:11 seems to identify women as deacons. Second, the designation that Phoebe served as “deacon of the church at Cenchreae” suggests that Phoebe served in an official capacity, for this is the only occasion that the term (δ ι ἀκ ο ν ο ς) is linked with an individual, local church. Third, it is likely that the masculine use of the noun (δ ι ἀκ ο ν ο ς) also suggests that the office is intended.⁹⁷

Paul continues his commendation of Phoebe and instruction to the Christians in Rome in verse 2. He maintains that there are specific ways that they are meant to assist Phoebe. Paul

⁹⁵ Robert Mounce, *Romans: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Nashville: Holman, 1995), 272.

⁹⁶ Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, 781.

⁹⁷ Schreiner, *Romans*, 787. It is important to note that the office of deacon was still being established and was very much still in process in the early Church. The New Testament does not give many details as to the specific action of the office of deacon, but based partially on hints within the New Testament and the later institution of the diaconate, it is likely that deacons were charged with visitation of the sick, poor relief, and perhaps also financial oversight of the church. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 914.

intends for them to “welcome” (π ρ ο σ δέξῃ σ θ ε) her “in the Lord” in a way that is fitting and distinct for believers, and that they are to “assist” (π α ρ α σ τ ῆ τ ε) her with whatever needs may arise. Specifically, Paul insists that Phoebe be the recipient of their hospitality. It is impossible to know what her specific needs may have been, but Paul is clear that the Romans are to stand by her in whatever matter she may need.⁹⁸

Paul continues his commendation of Phoebe and instruction to the Romans by asserting that she was a benefactor of many people, himself included. This indicates that she was a “person of substantial means, and therefore able to travel, and as a servant of the church in Cenchreae she was an appropriate person to act as a courier for Paul’s crucial letter to the churches of Rome,” according to Kruse.⁹⁹ The term Paul uses when describing Phoebe as a benefactor is “prostatis” (π ρ ο σ τ ᾶ τ ις), meaning, “a woman in a supportive role, patron, benefactor.”¹⁰⁰ Some interpreters overstate the significance of this word, but in light of recent studies, it is plausible to conclude that Paul’s description of Phoebe both as a deacon of the church and a benefactor of himself and many others is sufficient to show that she exercised a significant ministry in the church at Cenchreae, in addition to being a patron of Paul’s ministry.¹⁰¹

The rest of Romans 16 is comprised of a list of greetings, one that reveals the warm relationships that characterized the early Christian community.¹⁰² Nowhere else in Paul’s

⁹⁸ Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 528.

⁹⁹ Colin G. Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 556.

¹⁰⁰ Bauer and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 885. This term is not to be confused with the Roman patron-client system, which was of a different order and alien to the Greek tradition. Therefore, we cannot reason from that that Phoebe was the legal protector of the Christians at Cenchreae, for a woman could not hold that position. The word must be used figuratively in this place. But it is a word that points to an important person. Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 529.

¹⁰¹ Kruse, *Paul’s Letter to the Romans*, 557.

¹⁰² Schreiner, *Romans*, 789. In this greeting, Paul lists a number of prominent and respected believers in Rome in order to indicate the legitimacy of the gospel.

writings do we find such a lengthy list of personal greetings.¹⁰³ While this list is remarkable for a number of reasons, it is particularly noteworthy for the number of women who are mentioned, namely, Prisca, Mary, Junia, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, Rufus' mother and Julia. This list demonstrates that women were actively involved in ministry.¹⁰⁴

The verb “to labor” (*κ ο π ι á ω*) is used of four women: Mary (v. 6), Tryphaena, Tryphosa and Persis (v. 12). This is interesting to note because the same verb is used to describe Paul's ministry (1 Cor. 15:10; Gal. 4:11; Phil. 2:16; Col. 1:29; 1 Tim. 4:10) and of others who are described as working in ministry (1 Cor. 16:16; 1 Thess. 5:12; 1 Tim. 5:17). Although Prisca and Aquila, along with Urbanus, are called “fellow workers” (vv. 3, 9), it is interesting that the mention of exhausting work is restricted to women.¹⁰⁵ Schreiner concludes that these women were likely vitally involved in ministry.¹⁰⁶

Additionally, the term “co-worker” (*σ υ ν ε ρ γ ό ς*) is also used for men and women involved in Christian ministry. Paul begins his greetings by designating Prisca and Aquila as “co-workers.”¹⁰⁷ Some commentators note that, since Prisca is named first in some texts (Acts 18:26; Rom. 16:3; 2 Tim. 4:19), she was likely more prominent and knowledgeable than Aquila.

¹⁰³ Mounce, *Romans*, 274.

¹⁰⁴ Schreiner, *Romans*, 793.

¹⁰⁵ Mounce, *Romans*, 275.

¹⁰⁶ The verb (*κ ο π ι á ω*) does tell us that women were involved in important ministerial work in the early Church. However, James Dunn notes, “This general term does not necessarily denote leadership.” James D.G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, vol. 38B, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 894.

¹⁰⁷ We know from Acts, where she is called Priscilla, that they were expelled from Rome because of Claudius' decree (Acts 18:2). From there they traveled to Corinth, met Paul, who shared in the same trade, and ministered with him. Next, we find Priscilla and Aquila at Ephesus (Acts 18:25-26), where they instruct Apollos more accurately in the gospel. By the time Romans was written, they had returned to Rome, and the church was meeting in their house (Rom. 16:5). By the time Paul wrote his last letter, they had returned to Ephesus (2 Tim. 4:19).

¹⁰⁸ This hypothesis may be true, although it is impossible to verify. ¹⁰⁹ What is undebatable is that Prisca and Aquila worked together and were vitally involved in the early Christian movement. Schreiner maintains, “What is notable here is that Prisca was as involved in this task as her husband Aquila.”¹¹⁰ This term, then, is used in the New Testament of people who worked together in the fellowship of the gospel.¹¹¹ One of the ways Prisca and Aquila labored for the sake of the gospel was by having a church meet in their house almost everywhere they went.¹¹²

Paul's final greeting at the end of Romans does have one controversial reference found in verse 7.¹¹³ One of the primary questions in this text is the identity of Andronicus and Junia(s). Does the text refer to a man or a woman? Some have advocated that the name is a contraction of Junianus, in which case it is masculine. “Such a contraction is possible,” Schreiner notes, “since contractions were quite common.”¹¹⁴ However, most recent commentators, and by far the majority opinion of commentators before the 13th century, favored the interpretation that Junias

¹⁰⁸ Cranfield suggests, “The noteworthy fact that the wife’s name is more often placed before her husband’s than after it in the NT is, we would think, much more probably to be explained as a due either to her having been converted before him (and perhaps having led her husband to faith in Christ) or to her having played an even more prominent part in the life and work of the church than Aquila, than to her having been socially superior to him.” Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, 784.

¹⁰⁹ Schreiner, *Romans*, 795.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 532.

¹¹² There were no church buildings in the first century (not until the third century on our present information), so it was natural for Christians to meet in private homes. Ibid.

¹¹³ Paul greets Andronicus and Junia(s) and they are designated as kindred ($\sigma \upsilon \gamma \gamma \epsilon \nu \eta \varsigma$), which means they were Jewish (cf. Rom. 9:3). Paul also notes that they were fellow prisoners ($\sigma \upsilon \nu \alpha \iota \chi \mu \acute{\alpha} \lambda \omega \tau \omicron \varsigma$) for the sake of the gospel.

¹¹⁴ Schreiner, *Romans*, 796.

is a woman.¹¹⁵ This is because evidence for the contracted name is completely lacking in other Greek literature. Further, it is probable that Andronicus and Junias were a husband and wife.¹¹⁶

One of the primary reasons the above interpretation matters is due to the phrase that immediately follows. How should we interpret the phrase “ἐπιστημιολέυτοῖς ἀποστόλοισι”? The minority position is that it should read, “outstanding in the eyes of the apostles.” A large consensus prefers the translation, “distinguished among the apostles.” Schreiner notes, “The latter is almost surely right, for this is the more natural way of understanding the prepositional phrase.”¹¹⁷ However, he is also quick to note, “Paul is certainly not placing them among the Twelve.”¹¹⁸ The term “apostle” can have a technical sense, when used to refer to the Twelve, and a more non-technical sense, when used to refer to an important messenger.¹¹⁹ Morris asserts, “It is fairly clear from the New Testament that there was a wider circle of apostles than the Twelve, and it would seem that this couple belonged to that wider circle.”¹²⁰ The term “apostle” (ἀποστόλοισι) likely is used to refer to an itinerant evangelist or missionary.¹²¹ Due to this general use of the term, when referring to women and gender roles, Mounce asserts, “Since the term ‘apostles’ here should be understood in the wider

¹¹⁵ Ibid. Mounce maintains that virtually all, “Patristic commentators read Junia and considered her to be the wife of Andronicus.” Mounce, *Romans*, 275. Cf. Michael Burer and Daniel B. Wallace, “Was Junia Really an Apostle? A Re-Examination of Rom 16.7,” *New Testament Studies* 47 (2001): 76–78.

¹¹⁶ Joseph Fitzmyer, *Romans*, The Anchor Yale Bible Commentaries (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 737–38.

¹¹⁷ Schreiner, *Romans*, 796.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.

¹¹⁹ The term (ἀποστόλοισι) in this case likely refers to an important messenger of the gospel, but not necessarily the narrower, more technical usage. Cf. Bauer and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 122.

¹²⁰ Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 534. Cf. E.E. Ellis, “Paul and His Co-Workers,” ed. G.F. Hawthorne and R.P. Martin, *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1993), 186.

¹²¹ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 924.

sense of those who served as missionaries and evangelists, the passage really contributes little to the debate,” about the identity of Junias.¹²² While Mounce’s caution is important, it is also wise to heed this comment from Cranfield:

That Paul should not only include a woman . . . among the apostles but actually describe her, together with Andronicus, as outstanding among them, is highly significant evidence (along with the importance he accords in this chapter to Phoebe, Prisca, Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, Persis, the mother of Rufus, Julia and the sister of Nereus) of the falsity of the widespread and stubbornly persistent notion that Paul had a low view of women and something to which the Church as a whole has not yet paid sufficient attention.¹²³

Concluding on this note, we can affirm along with John Chrysostom, “Oh! how great is the devotion of this woman, that she should be even counted worthy of the appellation of apostle!”¹²⁴

In his closing comments on this passage, Moo notes:

All mention of nine women in this list reminds us (if we needed the reminder) that women played an important role in the early church. Moreover, five of these women — Prisca (v.3), Junia (v. 7), Tryphaena and Tryphosa (v. 12), and Persis (v.12) — are commended for their labor “in the Lord.” Ministry in the early church was never confined to men; these greetings and other similar passages show that women engaged in ministries and work just as important as those of men.¹²⁵

The final chapter in Romans cannot be overlooked as we consider the ministry of the early Church. As we study these names and the ministry they represent, we should be struck by how powerfully they indicate the way in which the teaching of Jesus and Paul was worked out in practice. Romans 16 echoes the earliest chapters in Genesis, which depict men and women co-laboring alongside one another stewarding the kingdom of God.

¹²² Mounce, *Romans*, 275–76.

¹²³ Cranfield, *Romans 9-16*, 789.

¹²⁴ Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 534.

¹²⁵ Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 927.

1 Corinthians 11:1-16

The complexity of this passage continues to frustrate modern interpreters, presenting the temptation to make the text say what they would like it to say. This is one of the lengthiest passages in the New Testament about the relationship between men and women in the worship gathering. The problem centers on head attire in worship. It seems some in Corinth were attempting to blur the distinction between the sexes in order to symbolize their new status in Christ.¹²⁶ Scholars have long debated the reason why women were choosing to abandon their head coverings. While it may be that Corinthian spiritualists were attempting to blur the distinction between men and women, it is also possible that women simply wanted to overcome their traditional secondary status by behaving like men. Whatever the motivation, Paul's main concern is order.

Paul begins a new section of the letter dealing with issues related to public worship. In verse 2, Paul begins with a commendation of praise (ἐπαινω), which is remarkable, given how infrequently he uses the word, especially in a context in which he is addressing very serious problems. Most interpreters see this verse as an affirmation of the Corinthians that intended to “placate them so they will be receptive to critical advice.”¹²⁷ Rosner and Ciampa maintain, “Paul introduces this text with an affirmation of his praise for the Corinthians; in the following verses he will clarify how their behavior can and should remain praiseworthy through their obedience to

¹²⁶ David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003), 505. It is assumed that the Corinthian women got carried away with their transformed spiritual status and carried things too far by breaching sexual decorum. They misapplied Paul's teaching that, in Christ, there is neither male nor female (Gal. 3:28) and they sought to eradicate any conventional male/female distinctions.

¹²⁷ Margaret M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Rhetoric of Reconciliation: An Exegetical Investigation* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 260.

his instructions.”¹²⁸ In other words, Paul begins on an encouraging note in order to honor his listeners.

Verse 3 begins with a positive phrase, “I want you to know,” suggesting a new insight. Paul establishes the premise that everyone has a head in order to set up his argument that what individuals do to their physical head in worship reflects negatively or positively on their metaphorical head.¹²⁹ The words “man” (ἀνὴρ) and “woman” (γυνή) can also be translated “husband” and “wife.” The mention of a veil, which indicates a woman’s marital status, tells us that pre-eminent in Paul’s mind would be females who were married. However, since unmarried women could also pray and prophesy, it’s best to retain the more generic translation, “man and woman,” not just husbands and wives.¹³⁰

Paul’s general concern is orderliness in the service but more specifically head attire that reflects the orderliness of God and the gospel. However, the meaning of “head” in this passage (κεφαλή) is complicated. Several interpretations have been put forward. First, “head” can be understood to designate hierarchy and to imply authoritative headship. Second, “head” can mean source. Finally, “head” can refer to that which is most prominent, foremost and pre-eminent. Garland maintains that the final option is to be preferred and can have the following connotations: (1) “the physical top of an object, such as a mountain or river”; (2) “that which is extreme, or first”; (3) “that which is prominent or outstanding”; and (4) “that which is

¹²⁸ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 505.

¹²⁹ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 514. Garland further suggests that Paul’s purpose is, “not to write a theology of gender but to correct an unbecoming practice in worship that will tarnish the church's reputation.” Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

determinative or representative by virtue of its prominence.”¹³¹ To Paul’s mind, everyone (except God) has a head, and it is important to understand who your head is.¹³² Therefore, it seems that Paul’s primary intent was to claim that both men and women have a head, and that how one treats their physical head either honors or dishonors their spiritual head.

After introducing the concept of the head and order, Paul applies this concept to praying and prophesying (vv. 4-5), specifically as it relates to male and female participation in the gathering (vv. 6-16).¹³³ In addition to numerous female prophets mentioned in the Old Testament (Exod. 15:20; Judg. 4:4; 2 Kings 22:14; Neh. 6:14; Isa. 8:3), Peter references Joel 2:28 in his sermon in Acts 2, stating that one of the marks of the last days would be the generous outpouring of the Spirit on all God’s people, with the result that Israel’s “sons and daughters shall prophesy.”¹³⁴ So Paul’s concern is not with whether men or women will prophesy (he assumes both will) but with the way in which one prophesies. It seems that this text demonstrates that women participated verbally in the earliest church services. Mounce asserts that this text “secures a vocal role for women in the public worship service.”¹³⁵ Some have contested that Paul is not referring here to the gathered people of God but to private gathering. However, the contemporary consensus is that Paul is addressing the public gathering of worship. As Garland points out, “Were it only some private gathering among the family or among only women, their

¹³¹ Ibid., 516.

¹³² Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 509.

¹³³ The main question in this paper is not to discuss the meaning of prophecy and prayer in this context, nor is it to discuss the head covering/hairstyle issue. Rather, is to consider the role of women in the Corinthian church.

¹³⁴ Roy E. Ciampa and Brian S. Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 511.

¹³⁵ William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, ed. Ralph P. Martin and Lynn A. Losie, Word Biblical Commentary (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 118.

attire would not have been in consideration.”¹³⁶ There is little to suggest that this is a private house-gathering and not the church assembly.¹³⁷

It bears repeating that Paul’s main point in these verses is that there are proper and improper ways of participating in the service. For either men or women to act in a way that would bring inappropriate shame on themselves or others in worship would be to undermine God’s intentions for His people and for their worship and would dishonor God Himself.¹³⁸ Again, Paul explains in verses 6-16 that the orderliness of creation ought to inform the orderliness of the worship service. Paul uses the term “shame” (αἰσχυρός) in three verses (vv. 4-6), indicating that a major concern for Paul in the gathering is respect, or the lack thereof. First, how one acts in the worship service shows respect for the object of our worship, God. Second, what is worn serves as a mark of respect for one’s husband or wife. The verses on mutuality (vv. 7-12) underscore this point. For example, verse 8 states, “For man was not made from woman, but woman from man,” and verse 12 shows the reciprocal point that, “For as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God.” These two reciprocal ideas are summed up in verse 11, which asserts, “In the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman.”

For the purposes of this paper, it cannot be missed that Paul affirms the difference, complementarity and mutuality of gender in this passage. Paul insists that gender distinction is more than a matter of mere physiology, and it is more than the result of a social construct. God created humankind male and female. Therefore, for Paul, the orderliness of creation is important

¹³⁶ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 518.

¹³⁷ C.K. Barrett, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 2nd ed. (London: Continuum, 1994), 331.

¹³⁸ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 512.

and should instruct orderliness of church service. As Thiselton points out, “Complementarity and mutuality in relationships is not an optional issue. It belongs to the very fabric of reality as God wills it to be.”¹³⁹ Additionally, gender distinction and mutuality, as affirmed in this passage, should not lead to a ministry practice of domination or manipulation but a practice that nurtures mutual respect and honor between both sexes.

1 Corinthians 14:26-40

Nearing the end of his first epistle to the Corinthians, Paul again considers the issue of orderly worship. Since intelligibility of the gospel is essential, how should we proceed in worship? For Paul, ordered worship should reflect God’s ordered creation and be for the building up of the community.¹⁴⁰ The clause, “When you come together,” (σ υ ν ἔ ρ χ η σ θ ε) reiterates that Paul is continuing to discuss proper behavior in the context of the worship gathering.¹⁴¹ This is the final occurrence of this verb in this letter (cf. vv. 11:17, 18, 20, 33, 34; 14:23). The emphasis here is on the entire body worshipping together in the gathering. For the earliest church, their gathering was not a performance to be watched but a service to be participated in. It was expected that every member of the congregation had a part to play in the worship service, not just the leaders. Ben Witherington is right to point out, “The impression is

¹³⁹ Ibid., 178.

¹⁴⁰ This purpose of building up the community has cumulatively become a refrain or axiom in 14:3, 5, 12 and 26 (where v. 12 not only uses the identical phrase π ρ ὸ ς τ ῆ ν ο ἰ κ ο δ ο μ ῆ ν but also adds the implicit τ ῆ ς ἐ κ κ λ ῆ σ ἰ α ς, which 1 Cor. 3:9 made explicit by describing the congregation as θ ε ο ὤ ο ἰ κ ο δ ο μ ῆ ν). Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 1133.

¹⁴¹ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 709. The verb (σ υ ν ἔ ρ χ η σ θ ε) means, “to come together with others as a group.” Bauer and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 769.

of a real act of the body, not merely the performance of a noted few.”¹⁴² However, because of its comparatively large size, the Corinthian church was combating disorderliness in its services.

Paul goes on to list the various gifts or ministries that were a part of the gathering. He says, “Each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation.” Gordon Fee maintains that these gifts “represent various types of verbal manifestations of the Spirit that should occur in their assembly.”¹⁴³ This list clearly focuses on gifts of the Spirit that are verbal in their manifestation, not other gifts such as faith, healing, miracles, helping and leadership (cf. vv. 12:9-10, 28), which are not mentioned here. Since God is a God of order, Paul insists that the church reflect this characteristic by being orderly itself. Worship should always be carried out in such a way as is consistent with the God of peace and order.

To this end, Paul instructs the Corinthian church to maintain order through the silencing of certain people. First, those who would speak in tongues when there is no interpreter should remain silent (v. 28). Second, those who would go on prophesying at the same time should speak one at a time (vv. 30-31). Third, disruptive women should remain silent and ask their husbands questions at home (vv. 34-35). This paper will focus solely on Paul’s final admonition of silence directed toward wives. Rosner and Ciampa maintain, “These verses have created interpretive difficulties since they were first penned.”¹⁴⁴ One of the primary reasons for this difficulty is that

¹⁴² Ben Witherington, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 285.

¹⁴³ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 690.

¹⁴⁴ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 718. Rosner and Ciampa continue to note, “Some witnesses transpose these two verses so that they appear after v. 40, leading Fee, Hays, Schrage, and others to conclude that it is a non-Pauline interpolation. Such scholars think that this text began as a marginal note which was later introduced into the text at two different places (although mainly following v. 33). Ellis has suggested that it may have been written in the margin by Paul himself before sending the epistle on its way. With thirty-six words it would be an extraordinarily long ‘marginal note’! One wonders how it could fit in the margin of an epistolary papyrus.” However, they further note, “No witness lacks this text, and the arguments in favor of its authenticity are substantial. The fact that the witnesses that transpose these verses to a later place in this chapter reflect a similar

Paul seems to be directly contradicting his teaching from chapter 11 that women should pray and prophesy, so long as they maintain proper dignity.

Several solutions to this apparent contradiction have been proposed. First, some have maintained that Paul's true feelings about women in the worship service come out in chapter 14, leading the reader to believe that he never really supported what he said in chapter 11. For the evangelical reader with a high view of Scripture, this is not a viable option. Second, some have maintained that these verses are an extended quotation from the letter the Corinthians sent to Paul, representing their views, to which Paul responds in verse 36. However, verse 36 is not a sufficient response to the developed viewpoint in verses 34-35. One would expect Paul to give more explanation of his own position than to the position he opposes, as would be the case if verses 34-35 were a quotation from the Corinthians. Therefore, this is an unlikely option. Most other solutions to this perceived tension between chapters 11 and 14 have been to interpret Paul as barring women from a particular type of speaking. Blomberg notes that it is "implausible that verses 34-35 are absolute commands silencing women in every way during the Corinthian worship service."¹⁴⁵

The verb translated "to remain silent" (σ ι γ á τ ω σ α ν) has already been used twice in this chapter (cf. vv. 28; 30) in reference to the gift of tongues and prophecy when someone else has a revelation. Therefore, the inclusion of the same verb relating to the silence of women, or wives, is most likely explained by the fact that Paul had just finished discussing two other situations (prophecy and speaking in tongues) that called for silence on the part of certain

(Western) textual tradition has led most scholars to conclude that the transposition reflects an attempt 'to find a more appropriate location in the context for Paul's directive concerning women.'" Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Craig L. Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 280.

participants in the church's worship.¹⁴⁶ It should be noted that in the two previous cases Paul is referring to particular instances in the gathering in which they are to remain silent, not at all times. As Rosner and Ciampa note, "Indeed, Paul is probably thinking of particular instances where different kinds of participants in the worship meeting should refrain from speaking."¹⁴⁷ Paul is not excluding these worship participants from all speaking (all were expected to participate equally) but from a certain kind of speech.

So, what kind of speech is Paul prohibiting? In what way is a woman meant to be restricted in the gathering? The verb "to speak" ($\lambda \alpha \lambda \epsilon \iota \nu$) was most recently used to reference speaking in tongues, so some believe Paul is suggesting that women should not speak in tongues in church. It is unclear why women would be singled out here, which makes this an unlikely reading.

Others have suggested that Paul is referring to prophecy because that is the most recent referent to speech in the chapter. However, this is illogical, given his discussion of it in chapter 11 (which indicates that women may prophesy as long as they do so with their heads covered).¹⁴⁸

A popular solution has been to suggest that what women are restricted from doing is contributing to the weighing of the prophecy, which was mentioned as recently as verse 29b. This interpretation is growing amongst contemporary evangelical scholarship and is a plausible interpretation.¹⁴⁹ Blomberg notes, "An authoritative evaluation of prophecy, while requiring

¹⁴⁶ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 720.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 721.

¹⁴⁹ Thiselton makes this argument, maintaining, "The speaking in question denotes the activity of sifting or weighing the words of prophets, especially by asking probing questions about the prophet's theology or even the prophet's lifestyle in public. This would become especially sensitive and problematic if wives were cross-examining their husbands about the speech and conduct which supported or undermined the authenticity of a claim to utter a prophetic message, and would readily introduce Paul's allusion to reserving questions of a certain kind for home."

input from the whole congregation, would ultimately have been the responsibility of the church leadership.”¹⁵⁰ Additionally, it is possible that Paul is referring to wives who are publicly questioning their husbands’ prophecies and bringing shame and dishonor on them, which is why they should ask their husbands at home. It certainly would have been awkward in Paul’s world to have a wife criticizing her husband’s prophecy in public.

So, how might a woman speak in a way as to dishonor her husband? It is impossible to be definitive. It is possible that they were either asking questions of their husbands in the middle of the gathering and it was causing distractions, or they were asking other men during the service rather than asking their own husbands at home. Therefore, Paul is instructing the Corinthian church to maintain order in their worship services by not allowing women to ask questions in disrupting ways but to keep the order of the service by asking their husbands at home.

Again, it is difficult to be certain whether Paul is referring to prophecy, the weighing of prophecy or distracting questions from women/wives. Among these possibilities, and in context with the rest of the epistle, it is clear that Paul is not completely limiting women from speaking in the gathering, but he is restricting a certain kind of speech that contributed to disorder in the congregation. How is this principle that maintained order in first-century Corinthian churches to

Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 1158. Grudem also supports this reading as he argues, “Suppose that some women in Corinth had wanted to evade the force of Paul’s directive. The easy way to do this would be to say, ‘We’ll do just what Paul says. We won’t speak up and criticize prophecies. But surely no one would mind if we asked a few questions! We just want to learn more about what these prophets are saying.’ Then such questioning could be used as a platform for expressing in a none-too-veiled form the very criticisms Paul forbids. Paul anticipates this possible evasion...” Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2000), 253. For a few examples see, D.A. Carson, *Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians, 12-14* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1996), 129–31; James B. Hurley, *Man and Woman in Biblical Perspective: A Study in Role Relationships and Authority* (Zondervan, 1981), 185–94. For a critique of this view see, J. Greenbury, “1 Corinthians 14:34-35: Evaluation of Prophecy Revisited,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 51 (2008): 721–31.

¹⁵⁰ Blomberg, *1 Corinthians*, 281.

be applied today? The principles underlying Paul’s exhortation may well call for a different set of concrete behaviors in our churches than would have been expected in first-century Corinth.¹⁵¹ We believe that there is a theological principle in this text that suggests that Christians should avoid the kind of speech that leads to disorder. However, this principle requires contextual and culturally-specific application. In our society, there is no disgrace for a woman to engage in public dialogue. There is no longer any shame or disgrace associated with such engagement. In fact, as Rosner and Ciampa maintain, “It would be considered shameful for a woman to be restricted from open participation in public conversations.”¹⁵² Garland concludes that “Paul’s instructions are conditioned by the social realities of his age and a desire to prevent a serious breach in decorum” and that he “may fear that the Christian community would be ‘mistaken for one of the orgiastic, secret, oriental cults that undermined public order and decency.’”¹⁵³ Therefore, in applying such a text to other contexts and cultures, we must be aware of the extent to which Paul and other biblical authors are sensitive to the social norms of proper decorum in the places where they ministered.¹⁵⁴

1 Timothy 2:11-15

One of the most frequently cited and debated passages concerning the role of women in the Church is 1 Timothy 2:11-15.¹⁵⁵ This text is the most frequently discussed passage in the

¹⁵¹ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 729.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 673.

¹⁵⁴ Ciampa and Rosner, *The First Letter to the Corinthians*, 729–30.

¹⁵⁵ For a helpful study on textual and cultural background of 1 Timothy, see S.M. Baugh, “A Foreign World: Ephesus in the First Century,” in *Women in the Church*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 25–64.

entire corpus of the pastoral epistles.¹⁵⁶ Ryken notes, “When it comes to understanding biblical teaching about the role of women in the church, there seems to be danger on every side.”¹⁵⁷ He articulates several of these challenges as: (1) the danger of controversy, (2) the danger of letting culture overrule Scripture, (3) the danger of allowing Church history to dictate how Scripture should be applied, (4) the danger of allowing personal opinion to distort our understanding of Scripture and (5) the difficulties with the text itself. Schreiner is correct to observe that “scholars debate virtually every word.”¹⁵⁸ Put simply, the passage defies simple answers.¹⁵⁹

The passage begins in verse 11 with a positive command: “Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness.”¹⁶⁰ With this statement, “let a woman learn” (μα ν θ α ν ε τ ω), Paul shatters ancient stereotypes. In the Roman world, women were thought to be intellectually second-class. It was widely accepted that females were mentally inferior to their male

¹⁵⁶ It should not be overlooked that this letter was originally sent to Timothy while he was in Ephesus, a city well-known for its temple to Artemis. This temple-cult worshiped a female deity, and all the priests were women. So, Paul is writing a letter to a city that had reorganized gender roles and he insists on a distinctly Christian framework based upon the created order. For recent work that has been done on the cultural background of this epistle, see Sandra Glahn, “The Identity of Artemis in First-Century Ephesus,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 172 (September 2015): 316–34; Sandra Glahn, “The First-Century Ephesian Artemis: Ramifications of Her Identity,” *Bibliotheca Sacra*, December 2015, 450–69.

¹⁵⁷ Philip Graham Ryken, *1 Timothy* (Phillipsburg, N.J: P&R Publishing, 2007), 87.

¹⁵⁸ Thomas R. Schreiner, “A Dialogue with Scholarship,” in *Women in the Church*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 184.

¹⁵⁹ Ryken, *1 Timothy*, 87–88. Ryken further notes, “In the face of these dangers and difficulties, the only way to proceed is to recognize that we bring assumptions to this passage, asking the Holy Spirit to correct those assumptions as necessary and working through the passage as carefully as possible.” Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ It should be noted that these verses are best understood in the passage 8-15 as a whole. It is at this point that Paul engages the congregation according to gender groups. He is adapting a household code and appropriating it to the church. He speaks authoritatively to the men instructing them about community and prayer and to the women about modesty. First, in Greek the term “man” (ἀ ν ἦ ρ) is ambiguous and could mean “husbands” or “men.” Typically, a modifying possessive pronoun would indicate “husband” (e.g., 3:2, 12; 5:9; Titus 1:6; 2:5; Eph. 5:22; 1 Pet. 3:1), or context will specify the meaning. The absence of this signal could support the more generic reference, but the context suggests that the husband/wife relationship could also be in view. The same problem presents itself with the term for “woman” or “wife” (γ υ ν ἡ). It is impossible to be positive one way or the other. Cf. Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, *The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 201.

counterparts. Schreiner contends, “Scholars have often pointed out that this injunction represents an advance over some traditions in Judaism that forbade women from learning.”¹⁶¹ Thus, in this context, most learning systems were designed for men, not women.¹⁶² Educating women was not a priority and was even regarded as undesirable by many. Here, we see Paul saying nearly the exact opposite. His positive prohibition, “let a woman learn,” (μα ν θ α ν ε τ ω) is actually a great liberation.¹⁶³ Baugh correctly notes, “Paul positively opens to all women the road to learning by enjoining them to learn in the church.”¹⁶⁴ Often, this passage is used to demonstrate Paul’s negative attitude toward women and the New Testament’s social condition of patriarchal attitudes toward gender. This text actually seems to demonstrate the opposite. Ryken maintains, “It is not too much to say that one burden of [Paul’s] ministry is to ensure that the gifts of women are used to their fullest extent.”¹⁶⁵ Lea and Griffin helpfully point out,

Paul’s command that the women “learn” reflects Christian practice which differed from the customs of Judaism. Judaism would enforce physical silence on women without concern for their growth in knowledge. At this point Paul was not borrowing from his Jewish heritage but was reflecting as a Christian a greater appreciation for the role of women in spreading the gospel. Paul’s commands encourage the women to give attention to God’s message in order to learn the essentials for Christian growth and development.¹⁶⁶

It is correct to point out that Paul is directly contrasting segments of Judaism that prohibited women from learning. For example, consider the phrase, “Better to burn the Torah than to teach

¹⁶¹ Schreiner, “A Dialogue with Scholarship,” 184. Schreiner is also right to point out that the main thrust of the passage is not their learning but the manner in which they learn. *Ibid.*, 185.

¹⁶² Ryken, *1 Timothy*, 89.

¹⁶³ This term can be defined as “to gain knowledge or skill by instruction.”

¹⁶⁴ Baugh, “A Foreign World: Ephesus in the First Century,” 62.

¹⁶⁵ Ryken, *1 Timothy*, 89.

¹⁶⁶ Thomas Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus: An Exegetical and Theological Exposition of Holy Scripture* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 1992), 98.

it to a woman.”¹⁶⁷ The Christian tradition does not reflect this Jewish practice as it follows the way of Christ, who taught Mary as she sat at His feet in the posture of a student listening to everything He said (Luke 10:39).¹⁶⁸ Scripture teaches that women are made in the image of God and have been called to be disciples of Christ, which requires learning. Women have the responsibility before God to be students of His Word. Biblical literacy, then, is of extreme importance for both men and women, and the Church is the primary place that the Spirit shapes all of Christ’s followers, men and women, into the image of Christ through the teaching, preaching and reading of Scripture.

Further, Paul teaches that women should learn in a posture of quietness (ἡ σ υ χ ί α) and submission (ὁ π ο τ α γ ῆ). First, Paul says that women should learn quietly (ἡ σ υ χ ί α). Some scholars have incorrectly interpreted this adverb to be indicating complete silence. However, it is better to interpret this word as exhorting a disposition of quietness (ἡ σ υ χ ί α) while they are learning.¹⁶⁹ This passage is calling women to learn in a disposition of gentleness. Lea and Griffin assert, “Paul was not demanding physical silence but a teachable spirit.”¹⁷⁰ This term must be understood against the backdrop of the Ephesian women. Some Ephesian women were characterized as idlers, gossiping and foolish talkers, and in general being busybodies (1 Tim. 5:13). Mounce notes that the Ephesian women “were anything but quiet.”¹⁷¹ This same

¹⁶⁷ Jerusalem Talmud *Sotah* 3:4,19a

¹⁶⁸ “Mary learned in the rabbinic style,” notes Ryken, “she kept her place; she was listening rather than talking; and she was sitting at Jesus’ feet, which was the place of submission to teaching authority. In other words, as Mary sat in the seminary of Christ, she ‘learned quietly and with all submissiveness.’” Ryken, *1 Timothy*, 91.

¹⁶⁹ This term is defined as “a state of quietness without disturbance.” Bauer and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 440.

¹⁷⁰ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 99.

¹⁷¹ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 118. Evidently the lack of constraint, also characteristic of the Corinthian church, was a problem at Ephesus.

word is used earlier in the chapter, where Paul encourages all Christians to lead “a peaceful and quiet life” (1 Tim. 2:2), which includes men and does not mean literal silence. If Paul wanted to communicate absolute silence, he could have used the noun (σιγή).¹⁷² Instead he uses a word that characterizes a gentle and teachable demeanor.

Second, women are called to learn with submissiveness (ὕποταξις).¹⁷³ The related verb is used through the New Testament to describe the submission of Christians to God the Father (Heb. 12:9; Jas. 4:7), of everything to Christ (Eph. 2:22; Phil. 3:21), Christians submitting to one another (Eph. 5:21), submission to authority (1 Cor. 16:16; 1 Pet. 5:5; Rom. 13:1, 5; 1 Tim. 3:4; Titus 2:9; 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:18) and wives to husbands (Col. 3:18; Eph. 5:21-22; Titus 2:5; 1 Pet. 3:1, 5).¹⁷⁴ Knight asserts, “Here submission is, more broadly, the norm for the relationship of women to men in authority functions within the church.”¹⁷⁵ This means that the women were meant to receive the word that is taught with cheerful agreement, as would be true with men in the congregation as well. Paul is establishing a Christian climate for learning. He is simply clarifying that women, now welcomed to the learning environment, should inhabit it in the manner of a student—in quietness and submission.

It is also important to note that Paul qualifies his comments about submission by using the term “all” (πᾶσι), meaning full submission.¹⁷⁶ Ryken insightfully points out that this is the

¹⁷² Cf. Schreiner, “A Dialogue with Scholarship,” 186.

¹⁷³ This term is defined as “the state of submissiveness, subjection, subordination.” Bauer and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 1041. Cf. (2 Cor. 9:13; Gal. 2:5; 1 Tim. 2:11; 3:4)

¹⁷⁴ George W. Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, ed. I. Howard Marshall and W. Ward Gasque (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 139.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁶ This qualification likely has an elative sense, meaning “with entire submissiveness.” Schreiner, “A Dialogue with Scholarship,” 187.

only kind of submission there is.¹⁷⁷ However, a question remains: Who are they to be submissive to? Are they submitting to God, to men, the congregation, sound doctrine or their teachers?¹⁷⁸ Schreiner provides help in answering this question by noting, “The submission of all women to all men is not in view, for not all men taught and had authority when the church gathered.” He further argues, “Thus, we should not separate submission to what is taught from submission to those who taught it. Women were to learn from those men (pastors and elders) who had authority in the church and manifested that authority through their teaching.”¹⁷⁹ It is a wonderful and beautiful thing to submit to a godly, God-ordained authority. Perhaps this is most clearly seen as the Son, in the incarnation, submits to the Father, despite His ontological equality, even unto death (Phil. 2:1-11). Thus, when women submit to their husbands and to the elders of a church, they imitate the way of Jesus. A key to the passage, therefore, is that Paul is commanding that women must be allowed to learn and study with quietness and submission and should not be restrained from doing so, but they are not to learn in order to overthrow the basic created order, which Paul addresses next.

Paul is not interested in educating the women so that they can become the leaders of the church, like the temple priestesses of Artemis, who reverse the created order.¹⁸⁰ The exhortation

¹⁷⁷ Ryken, *1 Timothy*, 92.

¹⁷⁸ Sometimes this is taken to mean that the women are to be in full submission to the men in the congregation, but there is no exegetical warrant for such a reading.

¹⁷⁹ Schreiner, “A Dialogue with Scholarship,” 187. Schreiner comes to this conclusion in part because of the parallels between verses 11 and 12. Verses 11 and 12 constitute an *inclusio*. Verse 11 begins with “quietly,” and verse 12 concludes with “quietly.” The permission for women to “learn” is contrasted with the proscription for them to “teach,” while “all submissiveness” is paired with “not to exercise authority over a man.” The submission in view, then, is likely to men, since verse 12 bans women from exercising authority over men. Yet the context of verse 12 suggests that submission to all men is not in view but to those who function as elders.

¹⁸⁰ Again, the context and occasion for writing this letter must be noted. Paul is denying that the women learn doctrine in order to become the religious leaders as they did in the temple-cult in Ephesus, but so that they can be faithful members of the congregation.

to learn is followed by the statement, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet” (1 Tim. 2:12). Even more than 1 Corinthians 14:24-35, the social setting of teaching and learning in the gathering is definitive.¹⁸¹ Philip Towner agrees, maintaining, “From 2:1 onward Paul has been preoccupied with activities and behavior within the worship assembly.”¹⁸²

A conjunction ($\delta \epsilon$) is used to indicate a contrast—that women are to learn, but they do not teach. The first word in the Greek text of verse 12 is “to teach” ($\delta \iota \delta \acute{\alpha} \sigma \kappa \epsilon \iota \nu$).¹⁸³ Ryken argues that this word has a specific function in the Pastoral Epistles, where “it refers to the exposition of Scripture in the official teaching of sound doctrine—the fundamentals of the faith (1 Tim. 4:11; 2 Tim. 2:2).”¹⁸⁴ Just as verse 11 was not a demand for all learning to be done in silence, as an unqualified absolute, but was concerned with women’s learning in the midst of the assembled people of God, so also the prohibition of teaching here has the same setting and perspective in view.¹⁸⁵ It is important to note that it cannot be a blanket prohibition on women teaching anyone. Women are clearly called to participate as teachers in the Great Commission, and older women are to train younger women (Titus 2:3-4). Timothy has the same faith as his mother and grandmother (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15). Priscilla, along with her husband, Aquila, taught

¹⁸¹ Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* (New York: Yale University Press, 2001), 206.

¹⁸² Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 190. Towner goes on to show how there has been confusion in some scholarship between what was public and the gathering. He argues, “Christian worship, carried out in the reception room or atrium of a house, was essentially a public activity... The point is this: the activities that combined to form a Christian worship meeting working essentially public and it is precisely the public nature of these activities addressed in 2:8-15 and the reactions of observing outsiders that concerned Paul.” *Ibid.*, 191.

¹⁸³ This word simply means to teach or to instruct someone else. Bauer and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 241.

¹⁸⁴ Ryken, *1 Timothy*, 95. Therefore, in this view, women should be excluded from preaching in the gathering.

¹⁸⁵ Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 140–41.

Apollos (Acts 18:26). Believers are to teach each other (Col. 3:16).¹⁸⁶ So, it is not teaching in general, something women are often commended and encouraged to do, but a specific kind of teaching. Schreiner argues that the teaching in view is “the authoritative and public transmission of tradition about Christ and the Scriptures (1 Cor. 12:28-29; Eph. 4:11; 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 3:16; Jas. 3:1).”¹⁸⁷ Who does teach this way? Schreiner maintains that this is typically “a function of the elders/overseers (1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17), and it is likely that Paul is thinking of them here.”¹⁸⁸ Mounce asserts, “The idea of a woman being submissive to all men is foreign to Paul's teaching, it is more likely that he means they are to be submissive to a certain group of men.”¹⁸⁹ Therefore, it is likely that Paul has in mind that women submit to the faithful teaching of the gospel, the apostolic tradition, which is taught and maintained by the elders. It is also worthwhile to note that most men are forbidden from this kind of ministry, as well. This verse does not mean that all men teach women or that no women teach men.

Paul's prohibition of women teaching would prevent them from serving as elders or ministers, but it is unwarranted to limit it to such a restriction from office-bearing. Paul uses functional language (“to teach”) rather than office language (“a bishop”) to express the prohibition. Here he prohibits women from publicly teaching men, and thus teaching the church.¹⁹⁰

Thus, the office or function of publicly teaching the gathering of the church is reserved for certain men—elders—or at least qualified men.¹⁹¹ This is an important point because what Paul

¹⁸⁶ Cf. Robert L. Saucy, “Women's Prohibition to Teach Men: An Investigation into Its Meaning and Contemporary Application,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 37 (1994): 79–79.

¹⁸⁷ Schreiner, “A Dialogue with Scholarship,” 190.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., 192. Schreiner also notes that “elders in particular are to labor in teaching (1 Tim. 5:17) so that they can refute the false teachers who advance heresy (1 Tim. 1:3, 10; 4:1; 6:3; 2 Tim. 4:3; Titus 1:9, 11).” Ibid., 191.

¹⁸⁹ Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 124.

¹⁹⁰ Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 141.

¹⁹¹ A qualified man is a man who has been trained, has been vetted and meets all of the specific qualifications of an elder at The Village Church. However, not all qualified men hold the office of elder. There are men on staff and in the congregation who meet the qualifications of elder but do not hold the office. Though they are not currently in the

is not doing is prohibiting women from teaching men in any scenario. This not only goes against a biblical command (Col. 3:16), but it also goes against the biblical example.¹⁹² Furthermore, Knight notes, “This prohibition does not relate to every aspect of the gathered assembly (praying, prophesying, singing; cf. 1 Cor. 11:5), but specifically in respect to that which is contrasted, teaching and authority.”¹⁹³

This text is certainly prohibiting women from a certain kind of authoritative proclamation of God's Word. Perhaps further insight can be gained by considering the term “exercise authority” ($\alpha \upsilon \theta \epsilon \nu \tau \epsilon \iota \nu$).¹⁹⁴ The verb translated “authority” ($\alpha \upsilon \theta \epsilon \nu \tau \epsilon \iota \nu$) is very difficult to translate.¹⁹⁵ This term is a *hapax legomenon*, meaning this is the only time it appears in the New Testament. Several interpreters suggest a translation such as “to usurp authority” or to “domineer” because they believed that the word should be understood as having a pejorative connotation.¹⁹⁶ However, more recent studies suggest the term should simply mean to “have or

office of elder (and may never be), we believe these men are trustworthy to teach the Word of God at The Village. A man who does not meet the qualifications of elder does not meet the requirements of being a qualified man. If a non-elder has been vetted and trained and meets the qualifications of elder, we do not want to restrict his ability to teach and preach at The Village by restricting preaching/teaching to only those who hold the office of elder.

¹⁹² Ryken, *1 Timothy*, 94. The Bible gives us numerous examples when Christian men learned from Christian women.

¹⁹³ Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 142.

¹⁹⁴ For an in-depth chapter on the meaning of $\alpha \upsilon \theta \epsilon \nu \tau \epsilon \iota \nu$ see, Al Wolters, “The Meaning of $\alpha \upsilon \theta \epsilon \nu \tau \epsilon \iota \nu$,” in *Women in the Church*, 3rd ed. (Wheaton: Crossway, 2016), 65–116.

¹⁹⁵ A helpful gloss for the word is “to assume a stance of independent authority, give orders to, dictate to.” Bauer and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 150.

¹⁹⁶ For a helpful analysis of these translations see Andreas J. Kostenberger, “A Complex Sentence Structure in 1 Timothy 2:12,” in *Women in the Church: A Fresh Analysis of 1 Timothy 2:9-15* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995), 81–103.

exercise authority.”¹⁹⁷ Scholars are in broad agreement that $\alpha \upsilon \theta \epsilon \nu \tau \epsilon \omega$ is derived from the noun $\alpha \upsilon \theta \epsilon \nu \tau \eta \varsigma$.

There has also been a great deal of conversation about the relationship between “to teach” ($\delta \iota \delta \acute{\alpha} \sigma \kappa \epsilon \iota \nu$) and “to exercise authority” ($\alpha \upsilon \theta \epsilon \nu \tau \epsilon \iota \nu$), which centers on the use of the conjunction ($\omicron \upsilon \delta \grave{\epsilon}$). Some have argued that the prohibitions are a *hendiadys*, which uses two different terms to denote one concept.¹⁹⁸ Others believe Paul is referring to two separate concepts, namely teaching and exercising authority, primarily because these terms are separated by five Greek words. Usually a hendiadys is side-by-side in sentence construction, making it more likely that in this case Paul is prohibiting two separate things.¹⁹⁹ The strongest evangelical scholarship seems to agree that Paul is referring to two separate concepts—teaching and acting in authority. Whether Paul has one thing in mind or two things in mind is not of extreme importance for this paper, because both are intimately related. Additionally, whether it refers to one or two things is of less importance than asking the question, “Who is it who teaches and exercises authority?” As Schreiner maintains, “It is most likely that Paul is referring to elder/overseer.”²⁰⁰ Put simply, Paul wants certain positions of authority in the Church to be reserved for elders; teaching is one way in which authority is clearly exercised in the Church.²⁰¹ Paul is referring, then, not necessarily to the office of elder, but to the function and role of

¹⁹⁷ Wolters, “The Meaning of $\alpha \upsilon \theta \epsilon \nu \tau \epsilon \iota \nu$.” Wolters maintains that it is very unlikely to have either a pejorative or an ingressive meaning, but rather through a study of cognates, context and ancient commentary, this word is meant to be understood in a positive or neutral sense.

¹⁹⁸ Cf. Philip Barton Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Letters* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009).

¹⁹⁹ Kostenberger, “A Complex Sentence Structure in 1 Timothy 2:12.”

²⁰⁰ Schreiner, “A Dialogue with Scholarship,” 193.

²⁰¹ This teaching and authority is not related to ontological hierarchy between men and women but to complementarity and specifically to an ecclesiastical office.

pastors and elders (ἐπίσκοπος/πρεσβύτερος).²⁰² Schreiner argues, “Women should not arrogate an official teaching role for themselves and serve as elders/pastors/overseers. They should learn submissively and quietly from elders instead.”²⁰³

It is essential to note that Paul grounds his prohibition in the created order: “For Adam was formed first, then Eve” (1 Tim. 2:13). Paul appeals to the second creation account (Gen. 2:4-25), which records that Adam was created before Eve. The Bible’s rationale is not simply based on Hellenistic culture, the context of Asia Minor or even on the particulars of the Ephesian church. Rather, Paul’s exhortation is rooted in the creation of the world: For Adam was formed first, then Eve. What must be noted in this text is that a difference in role or function in no way implies that women are inferior to men.²⁰⁴ In fact, Genesis 2 teaches the exact opposite: that men and women share in common their image bearing, something that can be said about no other part of creation. Nonetheless, Knight is correct to assert, “The strength of the prohibition here is underlined by Paul’s appeal to the creation order.”²⁰⁵ Put simply, Paul’s reading of Genesis 2 leads him to believe that in Eden, the order in which God created Adam and Eve signaled an important difference between men and women.²⁰⁶ Therefore, we must bind ourselves not to culture but to creation. Men and women are created absolutely equal but are also distinct in their sex and role. Paul’s prohibition cannot be rooted simply in the fact that we live in a fallen world. This verse is not talking about superiority but order. Nothing is said about the superiority of men

²⁰² Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 140. Knight further argues, “It is noteworthy, however, that Paul does not use ‘office’ terminology here (bishop/presbyter) but functional terminology (teach/exercise authority). It is thus the activity that he prohibits, not just the office (cf. again 1 Cor. 14:34, 35).” Ibid.

²⁰³ Schreiner, “A Dialogue with Scholarship,” 224–25.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 201.

²⁰⁵ Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 140.

²⁰⁶ Schreiner, “A Dialogue with Scholarship,” 201.

in this verse or in Scripture.²⁰⁷ Order is established and maintained through hierarchy, but hierarchy does not assign superiority. Rather, it assigns responsibility and accountability.

Verse 14 is more complex than verse 13, which teaches: “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.” Paul’s additional explanation for his prohibition concerning women teaching in verse 12 relates to the story of the Fall in Genesis 3.²⁰⁸ This is not meant to deny Adam’s sin or participation in the Fall (Rom. 5:12; 1 Cor. 15:21-22), but to indicate, as Genesis does, that Adam sinned willfully, not as a result of deception.²⁰⁹ A proper interpretation hinges upon the word “deceived” (ἡ π α τ ῆ ϑ ἡ).²¹⁰ The point is that Adam was not deceived. Unlike Eve, he knew exactly what he was doing when he ate the forbidden fruit.²¹¹ In using this word, Paul has in mind Genesis 3:13, where in the LXX Eve uses this word to describe how the serpent misled her. Eve’s deception and sin made her a “transgressor” (π α ρ α β ἄ σ ε ι γ ἔ γ ο ν ε ν).²¹² Both Adam and Eve are equally culpable for the sin in the garden. They cannot be co-heirs if they are not co-offenders.

Even in his discussion of ministry in gender roles, Paul keeps the gospel central because there is hope for all sinners. Verse 14 ends with the reality of sin, and verse 15 begins with the hope of salvation. Verse 15 states, “Yet she will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control.” Though there are a number of interpretive

²⁰⁷ Ryken, *1 Timothy*, 100. Ryken goes on to claim that what Paul is referring to here is primogeniture, in which the firstborn son held a place of spiritual responsibility in the family. The firstborn became the head of the household.

²⁰⁸ Lea and Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, 101.

²⁰⁹ Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 143.

²¹⁰ Bauer and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 98.

²¹¹ Ryken, *1 Timothy*, 101.

²¹² π α ρ α β ἄ σ ε ι is defined as an act of deviating from an established boundary or norm, overstepping, transgression. Bauer and Danker, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 769.

options for this passage, it is impossible to be completely certain which interpretation is best.²¹³

The most likely understanding of this verse is that it refers to eschatological salvation through the birth of the Messiah.²¹⁴ This interpretation best accords with the flow of Paul's argument.²¹⁵

Paul maintains that Eve (ἡ γυναιξί) brought herself into transgression through disobedience to God's command. Through obedience, difficult as it may be as a result of sin (Gen. 3:16), she gives birth to the Messiah, and thereby "she" (ἡ γυναιξί) (fulfilled, of course, in Mary; cf. Gal. 4:4) brings salvation into the world.²¹⁶ Women bear life, and through a woman, the One who is Life Himself would be born. This interpretation makes sense because of this passage's connection with Genesis 3:15, which promises that the offspring of the woman will defeat the devil.²¹⁷ Salvation would not have been possible without the incarnation, life, death, burial and resurrection of the Son of God.²¹⁸ Therefore, at the heart of this passage is not just gender roles but the gospel.

²¹³ The primary interpretive challenges are at least threefold. First, the verb "to save" (σωθησεται) is capable of meaning physical or spiritual salvation. Second, the preposition linking "childbearing" to "salvation" (δι) could express the means of salvation or indicate more loosely an accompanying circumstance. Third, in allusion to Genesis in the term "childbearing" will unavoidably call to mind the curse on the woman and perhaps other elements of Genesis 3 as well. Determining exactly the relationship between Genesis 3 and this passage is complex. Cf. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, 234–35.

²¹⁴ Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 146.

²¹⁵ Walter Lock, *The Pastoral Epistles*, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T&T Clark International, 2000), 1904. Lock put this verse into a poetic couplet as he argued, "A child from woman's seed to spring:/ Shall saving to all women bring." Ibid., 104.

²¹⁶ Knight III, *The Pastoral Epistles*, 146.

²¹⁷ Although Jesus ultimately defeats the devil on the cross through His burial, resurrection and ascension, these acts cannot be separated from His incarnation. His life and work are bound up into one salvific act and purpose.

²¹⁸ On that note, Stott argues, "Even if certain roles are not open to women, and even if they are tempted to resent their position, they and we must never forget what we owe to women. If Mary had not given birth to the Christ-child, there would have been no salvation for anybody. No greater honor has ever been given to a woman than in the calling of Mary to be the mother of the Savior of the world." John R. W. Stott, *Guard the Truth: The Message of 1 Timothy & Titus* (Downers Grove, Ill: IVP, 1996), 87–88.

Exegetical and Theological Conclusions

Based upon the previous sections of exegesis, we believe it is imperative that we outline several exegetical and theological conclusions based upon the text. These conclusions are not meant to be exhaustive as it relates to sexual complementarity, the church, the home or society. Rather, they function as the foundation of our understanding of the role of women at The Village Church.

First, both man and woman are created in the image of God and equally charged with the cultural mandate and the Great Commission. The shared humanity of men and women is greater than their sexual distinctions. The Bible teaches that God, in His wisdom and providence, created two complementary sexes for our good and His glory. Men and women are absolutely equal in essence, dignity and value. The Bible depicts a vision of brothers and sisters laboring alongside one another in the world and the Church for the sake of the kingdom of God. When we don't empower both sexes to engage and use their gifts, in complementarian partnership, the mission of the Church suffers. In light of this, we expect that the primary relationship between Christian men and women is that of brotherly and sisterly love. This uniquely Christian disposition reminds us that we ought to see each other as family in a special sense. Therefore, the primary relationship in the local church between men and women is the relationship of brothers and sisters, united in Christ, not subordinates.

Second, equal involvement in the church between men and women does not entail interchangeable involvement. Though we affirm the absolute equality between men and women, we believe the Bible places certain restrictions on women in ministry. Therefore, we believe that certain church responsibilities and roles are reserved for men. Our exegesis leads us to affirm

that the office of and some of the functions of elder/pastor are reserved specifically for qualified men. Scripture calls elders to oversee the church (1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:1-2) and preach the Word (1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:9).

Affirmations and Denials of The Village Church as a Result of Exegesis

We affirm that both men and women have been created in the image of God and are entitled to the privileges and held accountable to the responsibilities that come with reflecting our Creator.

We deny that either gender has been given or is entitled to greater dignity in society, the home, the church or the kingdom of God.

We affirm that both men and women are needed and necessary for the health and ministry of the church. Godly men and women should be visible partners in the corporate life of the church, deploying their diverse gifts for the good of the body. Simply put, all Christians contribute to the ministry of the church.

We deny that the church can flourish without brotherly/sisterly partnership. We deny that a church can exist in which the men flourish and the women do not, or vice versa.

We affirm that the role/function of elder is reserved for qualified men. Elders are distinctly responsible for overseeing the church (1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:1-2) and preaching the Word (1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 4:2; Titus 1:9).

We deny that the role of elder being withheld from women diminishes their importance or their influence in the church. The indispensable help women were created to give can and should be exercised in all manner of roles/offices in the church, excepting those reserved for qualified men.

We affirm that *all* members of the church should be in glad submission to the elder body and that *all* should be in glad and sacrificial submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church.

We deny that *all* women are subject to the leadership and authority of *all* men. Further, biblical submission is not indicative of subordination or inequality, as seen in the Son's submission to the Father (Phil. 2:1-11).

We affirm that complementarianism, rightly practiced, will lead to the recognizable flourishing of both sexes.

We deny any version of complementarianism or theological position that leads to the subjugation, abuse or neglect of any man or woman. We strongly denounce any distorted view of

Scripture that contributes to the belief that biblical manhood or womanhood includes or permits practices such as marginalization, subjugation, intimidation, neglect or any form of abuse.

We affirm that all men and women have been created in the image of God, whether single or married.

We deny that single men and women must be married to be meaningful participants in the corporate life of the church. We deny that single men possess any authority over single women. The way that they love and serve their sisters should not patronize or victimize, but rather, should be the fruit of brotherly/sisterly love, and vice versa.

Practical Implications: Women in Ministry at The Village Church

This paper has considered the exegesis of several relevant texts, theological issues and affirmations/denials, but it is now imperative that this paper lay out a biblical practice of women in ministry. At The Village Church, we desire to be biblical in every way. We do not want to be biblical in our confession alone, but also in our practice. This requires serious engagement with the biblical text, but it also requires wise theological judgments as we move from what the Bible says to how we live in the world.

We recognize that many will find our position and practice on women in ministry far too conservative. We also recognize that others will find our position and practice on women in ministry far too progressive. We ask for grace and mercy from both as we focus on the primary task of making disciples of Jesus Christ.

Additionally, we believe it is important to note that a theological confession of complementarianism does not necessarily result in uniform complementarian practice. We are eager to work with brothers and sisters and churches who view these issues differently than we do.

Professional/Organizational

The elders and Executive team, which includes women leaders, have designated the roles of lead pastor, campus pastor and Spiritual Formation pastor as reserved for elders/pastors/qualified men. The elders vet men for these roles and positions using a formal process. We seek to hire both men and women for every other role, for the health of the church within the framework outlined below. This gives both men and women opportunities to advance and grow in leadership and includes women participating in every level of the organization (except for the role of elder/pastor/qualified man).

The Gathering

Every member of the church body actively participates in our weekend worship services, not just those who are on the platform. Every role is open to both men and women, except the roles of preaching the Word of God and officiating the ordinances (baptism/the Lord's Supper). Every member is invited to baptize and distribute the elements of communion, but the roles of preaching and officiating the ordinances are reserved for elders/pastors/qualified men.

Teaching Environments in the Institute, High School Ministry, Steps and Recovery Groups

Mixed-gender teaching environments are overseen by elders and will be led by qualified men. These men should seek out, equip and utilize gifted men and women to help lead, teach and shape these ministries. Gender-specific teaching environments are taught by a leader of the same gender. Men teach men's environments, and women teach women's environments.

Groups: Within Home Groups, Institute Cohorts, Student Ministry, Steps and Recovery

Groups

Gender-specific groups are led by a leader of the same gender. Men lead men's groups, and women lead women's groups. Mixed-gender groups are led by both a man and woman. In mixed-gender group leadership we expect for there to be a co-discipleship relationship between the man and the woman. Co-discipleship in the group doesn't mean that male and female leaders are interchangeable or lead in the exact same way, but as co-disciplers, the man and the woman operate in their roles according to gifting. Both men and women may serve as group coaches, group ministers and group leaders.

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