

## **Introduction**

As Pastors and Elders at The Tree Church, we are asked questions regarding our understanding of what scripture says to the church. Without a denominational body to dictate what we teach and why we teach it, the leadership of The Tree Church wishes to clarify the official positions of our church body.

In creating an official position, we acknowledge the varying opinions held by brothers and sisters in Christ who disagree with the positions held within these pages. The Tree Church holds to these convictions with humility, but also with confidence that our interpretation is based on the best evidence for understanding scripture.

We hope these papers clarify our position, but we also invite discussion. If you disagree or have questions about our position, we hope this paper will lead to a conversation where we can grow together in our understanding of God's words to us.

## **Overview**

The debate over women holding ordained positions of authority is a discussion of modernity. Not because women have never been important to the church or a part of the church, but rather, it has been assumed for much of history that men hold the primary family and public role while women hold the domestic one. With growing emphasis on gender equality over the last 70 years, church leaders and scholars no longer can assume that the role women play in the church body is what it has always been. It would be easy to conclude that because much of history has relegated women to domestic life and supportive roles that God has ordained it this way. Some scriptures may appear to support such a stance. Yet, scripture's position on this is not as straightforward as it would seem in the few instances often quoted to support such a stance. Prohibitions against women's authority often stand alongside commands for how women should lead and celebrations of their exemplary leadership. While the OT and NT at times bear the marks of their cultural contexts (often negative views of women), God's commands and Jesus' treatment of women do more to protect, validate, uplift, and grant greater status to women than the cultural context. Scripture provides many examples of women whom God gifts, empowers, calls, and authorizes for leadership in the home, society, and the Church.

After years of exploring these passages and praying for wisdom, we believe scripture is far more interested in describing how we play the roles we find ourselves in than describing which roles we can or cannot hold. This is not to diminish the clear biological distinctions between female and male, nor the purposes for those distinctions. The limiting factor for women in leadership seems not to be God or scripture, but culture. Scripture's focus is healthy, human relationship, and it instructs us in that way. The God-designed society flourishes when men and women work interdependently toward the calling of representing God as stewards of the earth and witnesses to His reign and rule.

The Tree Church has benefitted from employing highly gifted women who exhibit the character, skill, and resilience needed of a leader in the church. Many have shepherded, taught, and led with the highest regard for the people they have been entrusted with without the position or a title that would have been granted if they were men. In a desire to be faithful to what we believe the scripture teaches and to follow where we sense the Spirit leading, The Tree Church holds that

women who exhibit a calling by God to ordained positions, who are equipped for these positions, and who are prayerfully confirmed by the appointed Elders and Pastors at The Tree Church can be ordained leaders at the Tree Church as Pastor and Elder.

## **The Prescriptive and Descriptive Nature of Scripture**

Throughout the following pages, you will find a summary of our study. It will briefly address the major questions discussed, explanations of scriptures that were considered, and implications of such a reading. It will also include an appendix of resources we used in this study. But this study must start with our approach to scripture. Many well-versed Bible scholars and theologians will disagree with our conclusion. But just as many would support these conclusions. Both would provide scriptural evidence, and both have a deep desire to discover and honor scripture's intent.

The conversation comes down to whether one believes the Bible is prescribing gender roles or describing gender roles as played out in the writers' cultural context. To read gender roles as prescription leads one to conclude that while equal before God, men and women are to play separate roles. Men in all times and places are made for public life and physical work and are solely intended for leadership. Women in all times and places are made for domestic life, support for the man, and child-rearing. They are each uniquely designed for these roles, and, together, they fulfill the call God has placed on them.

To read scripture as descriptively speaking to gender roles is to see scripture embedded into a cultural context that is often described and interacted with. Because society was patriarchal, the patriarchal ordering of men and women is assumed by the text. Those who see the following passages in this light see God interacting with a specific context in their own language and in ways they would understand while commanding how they are to live within *that context*. This approach focuses on the nature of men's and women's behavior toward God and each other, not the roles that they were destined to play. This does not remove the intrinsic biological distinctions between men and women, nor does it allow them to be independent of each other. The focus then is on the posture and behavior of each, no matter what societal role they may find themselves in. This approach takes the contextual nature of scripture and us into account, while striving to live according to the values and principles God has us designed for.

## **Genesis: Commonality and Distinction<sup>1</sup>**

In Genesis 1 and 2, we are given two distinct Spirit-led accounts of the creation story. Genesis 1 is a poetic telling of how God brought order to chaos (Gen. 1:2) through the power of His word. In Genesis 2, the poem ends, and we are drawn into a narrative that focuses on various details of *a-dam*-humanity- and their relation to God, creation, and each other. In these two short chapters, the author<sup>2</sup> shapes key theological principles that will resonate throughout the whole scriptural witness. These principles and concepts are often considered creation "ordinances". God's

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<sup>1</sup>The term "sex" is to be preferred over "gender". Sex refers to the biological distinctions between male and female. Gender is a social construct that defines males and females in ways that are not intrinsic to their biological sexes but are culturally appropriate. While some gender stereotypes are a result of biological makeup, resulting in a commonality, many are not and shift from culture to culture. The difficulty lies in distinguishing where biology ends and context begins. We are inseparably a blend of the two.

<sup>2</sup> Jewish and Christian tradition attributes the work originally to Moses.

sovereignty, God's love and good desire for creation, God's power through His word, the Spirit's presence on the earth, the importance of the sabbath (the rhythm of work and rest), and the intrinsic value of human life based on the *imago Dei*, and the importance of relationship are all examples of creation principles. These passages have also been seen as God's design for human relationships and human purpose. Many draw from these passages a set of distinctions for the sexes that they say are God-ordained, while others see more general principles for human relationships that lack a specific definition for men and women. What we take from these chapters is vital to how we view women and men and their roles in creation today.

### **Shared Imago Dei**

Both male and female are made in God's image (*imago Dei*).

*<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make humans in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over the cattle and over all the wild animals of the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth."*

*<sup>27</sup> So God created humans in his image,  
in the image of God he created them;  
male and female he created them.  
-Genesis 1:26-27 (NRSV)*

It is this distinction that gives human beings intrinsic value and worth. Both men and women bear this image equally.<sup>3</sup> No distinction of sexuality, ethnicity, functionality, morality, spirituality, or any other uniquely human classification gives humanity its value. Value and worth are rooted solely in God bestowing His image on females and males.

### **Shared Responsibility**

Women and men are both called by God and share in the responsibility of stewarding God's creation. God says to both male and female:

*<sup>28</sup> "...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 air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth."  
-Genesis 1:28 (NRSV)*

What is implied in Genesis 1, but explicitly stated in Genesis 2, is that it will require their union to fulfill this calling.

*7 then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. 8 And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9 Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.*

*15 The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.*

*19 So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there*

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<sup>3</sup> It is important to note this because it was not the assumed position at times during church history. Influenced by Greek thought, many of the church fathers had a complicated view of women.  
<https://margmowczko.com/misogynist-quotes-from-church-fathers/>.

*was not found a helper as his partner. 21 So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man.*

**- Genesis 2:7-9,15,19-22 (NRSV 1989)**

While man is already at work, he and his work are found to be incomplete. A woman is created as a “helper” to partner with the man. The term “helper” in Gen. 2:20 does not imply a subservient role for the woman.<sup>4</sup> Equally, they are called, and both are vital to see it completed.

### **Female and Male Distinction**

While both females and males are created in God’s image and both bear the call to steward creation, there is a clear distinction between the female and male sexes. Genesis 1:27 does not leave humanity in the generalized category of “human”. It makes sexual distinctions:

*<sup>27</sup> So God created humans in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.*

**-Genesis 1:26-27 (NRSV)**

The account of the *a-dam*<sup>5</sup> in Genesis 2 is also an account of creating distinctions.<sup>6</sup>

*7 then the Lord God formed man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being. 8 And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the east; and there he put the man whom he had formed. 9 Out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil..*

*19 So out of the ground the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. 21 So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. 22 And the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. 23 Then the man said,*

*“This at last is bone of my bones  
and flesh of my flesh;  
this one shall be called Woman,  
for out of Man this one was taken.”*

**- Genesis 2:7-9,15,19-23 (NRSV 1989)**

God forms the *a-dam* from the ground and breathes life into him. The human being formed from the dust creates an important dichotomy. While made in God’s image, the human remains distinct from God.<sup>7</sup> In tending and naming the animals, the human was found to be distinct from the animals.<sup>8</sup> God creates the woman from man’s side, and in the man’s declaration of “woman”,

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<sup>4</sup> The Hebrew *āzar* at times refers to God as humanity’s help (Gen. 49:25). God is clearly not subject to humanity, and yet He acts as their helper. The idea is that the man was given a partner to share in the calling of God for their life.

<sup>5</sup> Adam is not used as a proper name until Gen. 2:25 after the male/female distinction is made. TDOT, 225

<sup>6</sup> Bratsiotis, N. P. “אָדָם.” Edited by G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren. Translated by John T. Willis. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977. V1, 225-229.

<sup>7</sup> TDOT, 225.

<sup>8</sup> TDOT, 226

we get the distinction between man (*ish*) and woman (*ishah*).<sup>9</sup> While some will argue that in declaring her “woman” the man is enacting the same authority as he did with the animals, this instance is not an act of authority but a recognition of distinction.<sup>10</sup> The implication here is that while males and females share in equal value and responsibility, they are not the same. It will take a healthy relationship with one another to fulfill the calling of God.<sup>11</sup>

*“24 Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.”*

*-Genesis 2:24-25 (NRSV 1989)*

Thus far, the scriptural ideal for males and females is mutual dependence with equal value and authority/responsibility in the calling to fulfill the command of God.<sup>12</sup> Together, they form the most basic structure of human society, the household or family.

### **Distinct Roles?**

We believe certain role distinctions are “generally” evidenced in men and women.<sup>13</sup> While the goal of Genesis is not to give a detailed account of male and female gender roles, there are glimpses given of how sexual distinction results in certain engendered roles. Implied are the complimentary roles played by males and females in the procreative act. These roles are not interchangeable. The biology of women and men also contributes to these generalizations, such as physicality; men’s size/strength are typically more beneficial for hard, physical labor. Women are designed physically and (typically) hormonally for childbirth and child-rearing. However, there is no indication that they were limited to these roles. Men were involved in the rearing of children, and women would take on household leadership responsibilities. Again, together, they are to fulfill God’s calling.

Our first real look at what we would typically define as “roles” will come not in the Edenic state, but in the cursing that results because of their rebellion. Within this curse, it is implied that the effects hit at the heart of their sphere of influence; the woman’s role of childbearing is frustrated as well as the man’s working of the ground. It would be important here not to overemphasize these roles, or underemphasize them. They describe life as man and woman knew it. More pertinent to the point to be drawn here is that with the removal of God’s blessing, every aspect of their lives will be impacted, especially their relationship to each other.

### **Disordered Relationships**

We believe that central to the problem of this discussion is disordered, human relationships. Blame, enmity, dominance, and competition replace trust in God and each other.

*16 To the woman he said,*

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<sup>9</sup> TDOT, 225

<sup>10</sup> The man does not name Eve until Gen. 3:20, after the curse.

<sup>11</sup> TDOT, 226-227

<sup>12</sup> TDOT, 226-227

<sup>13</sup> These are “generally” observed, but there are exceptions. Societal standards (i.e. culture) then interplay with these biological patterns to create what we call gender. As noted above, we must keep in mind that many gender markers change with culture, and it is difficult at this point to define such things as men working outside of the home and women working in the home as a divinely inspired mandate from Genesis 1 and 2.

*“I will greatly increase your pangs in childbearing;  
in pain you shall bring forth children,  
yet your desire shall be for your husband,  
and he shall rule over you.”*  
*17 And to the man he said,  
“Because you have listened to the voice of your wife,  
and have eaten of the tree  
about which I commanded you,  
‘You shall not eat of it,’  
cursed is the ground because of you;  
in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life;  
18 thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;  
and you shall eat the plants of the field.*  
*19 By the sweat of your face  
you shall eat bread  
until you return to the ground,  
for out of it you were taken;  
you are dust,  
and to dust you shall return.”*  
**-Genesis 3:16-19 (NRSV 1989)**

Particularly, verse 16 speaks to the difficulty that will result in a relationship. The woman will “desire” her husband, and he will “rule over” her. There have been varying interpretations of verse sixteen.<sup>14</sup> Does verse 16 show that the authority of the husband is a result of the curse, or was it already implied in Genesis 1 and 2? Is it that women have lost their equal footing with men, or that women will now simply resent the leadership they were designed to thrive under? Landing on an interpretation here is precarious. Yet, the thrust of the passage can be understood without deducing the answers to these questions. God desires for human relationships to flourish in unity and intimacy. Because we reject God, this is now challenged at the very core of who we are as men and women. God’s redemptive work will be one of correcting our hearts and posture towards each other, not necessarily our positioning.

## **Household Codes and the Headship in the Family**

The writings of the Apostle Paul make up a majority of the New Testament. By far, he has created the largest volume of text, and his Spirit-led thoughts compel much of the content we have about the early church and its world. Paul was a Jewish Pharisee and a Roman citizen from the first century. When Paul looked for examples of how to describe the relationships that existed within his churches, he borrowed from what was common and known to his audience, the Roman household codes. These codes created an ordered structure that allowed the household (extended family, slaves, and employees of the family) to know how to relate to each other with the larger society in mind. The epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, and 1 Peter all borrowed from these frameworks to instruct those in the house churches on how they should keep order and relate to one another.

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<sup>14</sup> K. A. Mathews, *Genesis 1-11:26*, vol. 1A of *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1996), 251–252.

## The Ordering of the Roman House

In the Roman codes, the Roman male was given “complete authority over wife, children, and slaves”.<sup>15</sup> Authority was top-down, and little instruction was given to how the male should handle his family other than keeping it in order. The purpose of these codes was to teach men how to subject their household; wives, children, slaves, and employees were to be kept in good order.

## The Ordering of the Family

The church for Paul existed within this broader Roman society. Order was important in the community of faith and a regular theme in the New Testament writings. This was important for two reasons. First, disruption and distraction in the church’s gatherings created chaos and retracted from their worship and life together. Distracting clothing fashion, ill-timed questions, self-serving behaviors, and even the misuse of spiritual gifts all made the list of distractions that the NT authors wanted to reign in. Second, outside opinion was a regular concern for the NT authors.<sup>16</sup> Third, to break these societal structures was often to place women in a more vulnerable position since they had little social capital, which made caring for themselves difficult. The budding churches needed to find their place within the greater society. If the churches were thought of as a sect of Judaism, if they did not disturb society, they would be left to operate as is and carry on their witness. This is not to say that the church always tried to blend in. The gospel witness would contrast the greater culture in many ways, but the NT authors were never interested in outright rebellion or overthrowing societal structures. Paul would see the transforming power of the church as something that changed the world from within, slowly, by living a cruciform<sup>17</sup> life. The churches lived in this tension of the redemptive ethic that Christ had begun and the reality of the world as it was.

Paul finds in the Greco-Roman household codes an understandable tool to explain how Christians were to behave in the church, in the home, and in the broader society. He uses language similar to the Greco-Roman codes, such as order, authority, and submission. Yet, Paul re-orientes these codes in a few ways.

*18 Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.*

*19 Husbands, love your wives and never treat them harshly.*

*20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this is your acceptable duty in the Lord.*

*21 Fathers, do not provoke your children, or they may lose heart.*

*22 Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything, not only while being watched and in order to please them, but wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord.*

*4:1 Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, for you know that you also have a Master in heaven.*

*-Colossians 3:18-22;4:1 (NRSV 1989)*

First, Paul does not address only the patriarch of the household but also those within the house. This may seem like a minor change, but by addressing these “subordinates”, Paul places on them a sense of autonomy in a culture where they had little. He presumes their ability to freely choose to “be subject” and “to obey”. Second, and more profoundly revolutionary, he calls the patriarch

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<sup>15</sup> Keener, Craig S. 1993. “Man and Woman.” In *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters*, edited by Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid, 583–92. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press.

<sup>16</sup> Titus 2:3-5

<sup>17</sup> This term means to live the “self-emptying” way of the cross that Jesus modeled for the church. See Michael Gorman’s *Reading Paul*, for a better understanding of “cruciformity”.

to use his position in the Roman house not to subject those in his house, but to treat them with love, patience, and justice. This is seen in greater contrast in the coded section of Ephesians.

*21 Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.*

*22 Wives, be subject to your husbands as you are to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife just as Christ is the head of the church, the body of which he is the Savior. 24 Just as the church is subject to Christ, so also wives ought to be, in everything, to their husbands.*

*25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, 27 so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or anything of the kind—yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, 30 because we are members of his body.*

*31 “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” 32 This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. 33 Each of you, however, should love his wife as himself, and a wife should respect her husband.*

**-Ephesians 5:21-33 (NRSV 1989)**

Paul sets the stage by calling everyone in the church to “[b]e subject to one another out of reverence for Christ”. The Christ-like posture toward each other is that of *kenosis*<sup>18</sup> – self-emptying is to be embodied by everyone, male and female. This is the posture of a Christ-like relationship; embodied in humility, submission, and serving. He then goes on to give examples in the household. Wives should embody this emptying by willingly<sup>19</sup> “submitting”<sup>20</sup> themselves to their husbands. Husbands, “love...just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her”. The wife “subjects”, and the husband “gives his life for her”. The posture toward each other is the same others-focused, self-emptying that Christ did for the church.

For Paul, Christ’s reconciling work has shifted human relationships.

*28 There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus.*<sup>21</sup>

**-Galatians 3:28 (NRSV 1989)**

Within the walls of the church, this shift was to begin to play out in how they treated each other. No matter how societal roles would be defined, the reconciling nature of Christ and the call to share in His self-emptying posture changed the way men and women viewed and treated each other.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> He earlier called the church to take the same self-humbling posture toward each other as Christ did in the incarnation and crucifixion. Philippians 2:1-11.

<sup>19</sup> Again, this is a voluntary, not demanded, act done out of association and love for Christ.

<sup>20</sup> The word for “submit” or “subject”.

<sup>21</sup> The context of this passage is that the dividing human categories that had the potential to inhibit access to God has been undone in Christ. Faith in Christ has made all of these categories children of God.

<sup>22</sup> This equalizing trajectory of the Gospel was used by abolitionists in effort to end the slave trade.

## The “Head” of the House

While Paul pushes a new relational ethic, he does so within the categories he knows. Paul still uses the categories of male/husband and female/wife. In the same passage in Ephesians that promotes a gendered mutuality, Paul uses Christ and the Church to illustrate the husband/wife relationship. Christ is unarguably the authoritative “head”<sup>23</sup> of the church, and Paul likens the husband to Christ and the wife to the Church. We have already seen similar language in Colossians, and we will see it again in 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy below.

The question then is to what degree does Paul see the husband/wife relationship in this authoritative light? Paul, like Jesus, does not see authority as opposed to this new way of relating to each other. He will give numerous instructions on interacting with “authority” throughout his writings.<sup>24</sup> Again, He is not looking to tear down roles, institutions, and structures that God has used/allowed in the ordering of society. His greatest concern is that one fills these roles in a Christ-like way. Paul sees and assumes male “headship” in a family as something that is reconcilable with this new gospel living. In a culture where men tend to abdicate their roles as husbands and fathers, the need for men to take on this sense of leadership and responsibility in the family is an important call. But always sharing in the Christ-like emptying posture Paul pulls to the forefront of these passages.

## Order in the Household of God

Paul, in some sense, sees the family and the church reflect each other.<sup>25</sup> Paul still values order and keeping a sense of the church’s societal reputation. The kenotic ethic remains the same for both men and women. But again, Paul creates tension between his words in certain passages and the trajectory of his thoughts.

If one claims to place a high value on scripture, these passages are not to be avoided or dismissed. Yet, they can be interpretive black holes. This is not simply because they stand in opposition to our modern context. There are plenty of passages that challenge and call our societal norm into submission of scriptural authority. Rather, they are difficult because of Paul himself. His eschatological vision and practice often stand in tension with what he says. Below we will briefly explore Paul’s prohibitions of women in leadership roles.

### 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

Understanding Paul’s approach to women in leadership is not as straightforward as one might assume. In Paul’s words and instructions, he appears adamantly against women taking roles of authority based on a created order.

*2 I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions just as I handed them on to you. 3 But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the husband is the head of his wife, and God is the head of Christ. 4 Any man who prays or prophesies with something on his head disgraces his head, 5 but any woman who prays or prophesies with her head unveiled disgraces her head—it is one and the same thing as having her head shaved. 6 For if a woman will not veil herself, then she should cut off her hair; but if it is*

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<sup>23</sup> Greek *kephale*. The lexical and contextual nature of this word have been exhausted. It carries both a sense of “authority” and “source” (as the head of a river).

<sup>24</sup> Romans 1:13:1-7; Galatians 2:1-10; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Timothy 2:17;

<sup>25</sup> Peter T. O’Brien, “Church,” *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 128.

*disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or to be shaved, she should wear a veil. 7 For a man ought not to have his head veiled, since he is the image and reflection of God; but woman is the reflection of man. 8 Indeed, man was not made from woman, but woman from man. 9 Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man. 10 For this reason a woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. 11 Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man or man independent of woman. 12 For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman; but all things come from God. 13 Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head unveiled? 14 Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair, it is degrading to him, 15 but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering. 16 But if anyone is disposed to be contentious—we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.*  
**1 Corinthians 11:2-16 (NRSV 1989)**

The argument Paul makes in this passage is complex and often break-neck in the way he goes back and forth from men to women, to angels, to God. It is important to show first the context of the passage to understand where Paul is going with his argument. The Corinthian church is a mess of disorder. Pride and freedom of expression have become the predominant mode of operation.<sup>26</sup> This expression of “rights” by some was disturbing others within the church, and love was being abandoned. The shedding of societal norms, such as head coverings and hair preferences for women and men, was an abandonment of unity and disruption to the service.<sup>27</sup>

It should not be overlooked that Paul illustrates his argument for order with an example of order in God’s relation to Christ, Christ to Adam, and Adam’s relation to Eve. Paul clearly has a sense that the order of creation dictates a sense of authority.<sup>28</sup> The literal reading is indicative of authoritative hierarchy in I Cor. 11:3-10. But, two questions must be asked if Paul intends this reading to be taken as the mode of operation for males and females for all time. First, is Christ eternally subordinate to the Father? The early church would conclude that, while in the economy of redemption, Christ gladly operated in a role of submission to the Father for the reconciliation of the world, yet in doing so, He never lost his unity with the Father or His substance as God.<sup>29</sup> He also does not seem to be in a position of submission but sits enthroned, ruling and reigning with the Father.<sup>30</sup> The Trinity perpetually exists as three persons of one substance who function in a “mutual fellowship”.<sup>31</sup> Distinct roles are played by each person at certain times, but are equal authority as one God. Second, if the focus is proving authoritative gender roles, Paul undermines that focus in 11:11-12 when he walks the illustration back. The focus shifts from the subordination of women to men to their mutual interdependence on each other and God. This redemptive reorientation in Christ changes the posture and nature of our relationships with each other. This thought appears in the Galatian passage quoted above as well.

With the illustration not being the focal point of the passage, the highly contextual nature of the commands given, and with the post-redemption focus of mutual interdependence, Paul is not leveraging an idea of subordination of women in all circumstances for all time, but simply addressing his Corinthian context.

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<sup>26</sup> 2 Corinthians 8, 10.

<sup>27</sup> Craig S. Keener, “Man and Woman,” *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 585.

<sup>28</sup> He uses this example again in 1 Timothy 2:13.

<sup>29</sup> Philippians 2:5-11.

<sup>30</sup> Philippians 2:5-11.

<sup>31</sup> Alister E McGrath, *Christian Theology: An Introduction*, Kindle 6th (West Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., 2017), 305.

## 1 Corinthians 14:33b-35

Profoundly more difficult to understand is Paul's command for women to be silent in the Corinthian church.

*33b for God is a God not of disorder but of peace. (As in all the churches of the saints, 34 women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be subordinate, as the law also says. 35 If there is anything they desire to know, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.*

### *1 Corinthians 14:33b-35 (NRSV 1989)*

If taken at face value, this passage contradicts Paul's earlier thought that women were to pray and prophesy with their heads covered.<sup>32</sup> Both acts would require speaking out in the gathering. As we will explore later, Paul is known for admonishing women's roles in prophecy. This would imply that Paul has a specific group of women in mind who are being disruptive to the order of worship with their uninformed questions.<sup>33</sup> It was societally shameful to disrupt with a question ignorant of the topic, which women were educated less in this setting.<sup>34</sup> This would make sense of Paul's language here. Paul tells them that silence and subordination of women are customary in the churches and according to the "law". But the "law" referenced here is not a reference to the Law of Moses or even scripture in general, but rather a broader societal law, i.e. cultural norms.<sup>35</sup> The word Paul chooses for "shameful" in 14:35 infers a sense of "being socially or morally unacceptable".<sup>36</sup> Paul's context here leans toward women being disruptive, asking uninformed questions, and creating a sense of social shame.

Just as Paul flipped his illustration in 11:11-12 to reveal a trajectory of interdependence, here, too, Paul upends his insistence on keeping societal norms by encouraging women to be inquisitive and learn. He does so again in 1 Timothy 2:11.

## 1 Timothy 2:11-15

Timothy is a young pastor who Paul appointed to oversee the church in Ephesus. Like the passage in 1 Corinthians 14, we see another prohibition of women speaking in the church.

*11 Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. 12 I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent. 13 For Adam was formed first, then Eve; 14 and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. 15 Yet she will be saved through childbearing, provided they continue in faith and love and holiness, with modesty.*

### *1 Timothy 2:11-15*

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<sup>32</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:5.

<sup>33</sup> Keener, "Man and Woman", 583-92.

<sup>34</sup> Keener, "Man and Woman", 583-92.

<sup>35</sup> Harm W. Hollander, "The Meaning of the Term 'Law' (Νόμος) in 1 Corinthians." *Novum Testamentum* 40, no. 2 (1998): 117-35. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1560981>. 127-130.

<sup>36</sup> William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. 2000. "αἰσχροῦς," In *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 29.

Like Corinthians, he again encourages women to learn, but they are to do so in “submission” and “silence”. The imperative to silence is to refrain from teaching and having authority over men. The difficulty of understanding Paul here is fourfold. First, the word used for “authority” is *authenteo*, which is not Paul’s normal word for authority.<sup>37</sup> The debate over this unique usage is whether Paul is prohibiting any type of authority or an unhealthy type of authority. While there is no textual evidence for this, many scholars think that women were usurping authority and being domineering. It cannot be dismissed easily that Paul intends a unique meaning of authority since it is a unique word choice when he so often has another word in his arsenal for authority. Second, Paul includes women in the call to prophecy,<sup>38</sup> an act that has a revelatory and authoritative teaching element to it.<sup>39</sup> Priscilla (named first but along with her husband Aquilla) is also credited as teaching Apollos, a leader at Corinth.<sup>40</sup> Third, the words for “man” and “woman” in Greek are the same words for “husband” and “wife”. Paul is giving Timothy instructions for men and women within the church setting, and it may seem odd to make these instructions for just husbands and wives. Yet, Paul intertwines the household and the church in his other writings and uses the language of submission within the familial framework.<sup>41</sup> The husband/wife translation seems less likely as it would limit Paul’s imperative on how they should interact in the gathering. Fourth, the use of the Adam/Eve illustration here supporting his argument is highly problematic considering what we know about Paul’s thoughts in other places. Paul, in no other place, contends for salvation by childbirth (or any other action by that matter). Neither does he treat women as morally inferior to men or see men as free from the ability to be deceived.<sup>42</sup> It is difficult to understand exactly Paul’s reasoning for the illustration and commanding silence if he celebrates and allows the opposite in other settings. This leads us to conclude that Paul has a specific reason for these statements in their original contexts, but it does not necessarily apply to every church across time and space.

## Scriptural Precedent for Women in Leadership

While male leadership is the norm throughout scripture and history, there are many examples of women holding and exercising authority in Israel, the Church, and society at large.

### Old Testament Examples

Women in the OT operated in leadership in both religious and political life. While women could not be priests in the Tabernacle and Temple worship, women did play a role in Israel’s religious life. Miriam was the first woman to bear the title “prophet”, a title shared with her brother, Moses. Huldah would later take on Miriam’s mantle as a prophet to King Josiah and his attempts to return Israel toward faithfulness.

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<sup>37</sup> Paul uses *eksousia* in every other mention of authority.

<sup>38</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:5.

<sup>39</sup> Lucy Peppiatt, “Women and Worship in Paul’s Churches: Apostles, Prophets, and Teachers,” *The Bible and Interpretation*, September 2017, <https://bibleinterp.arizona.edu/articles/2017/09/pep418013>.

<sup>40</sup> Acts 18:25

<sup>41</sup> Paul goes from the whole church to husbands and wives specifically in Ephesians 5 and in the other household codes.

<sup>42</sup> Adam is Paul’s token of sinful humanity in Romans 5-6.

Women also held political positions of authority. Deborah can be counted as one of the more valiant and noble judges who led Israel between Moses and King Saul. Esther, a Jewish maiden, becomes queen of the Persian Empire, rescuing Israel from a genocidal fanatic.

### **Gospel Examples**

One of the difficulties in claiming examples of women in leadership in the Gospels is that positions of authority were not as clearly defined at this time in the church, but we can see how women were viewed and invited to participate in ministry by Jesus and the disciples. The gospels are full of women who are exemplified as models of faith and leadership.

Mary and Elisabeth are both featured as central figures and models of faith when Joseph is primarily neglected in the story, and Zechariah, a priest, is corrected for his lack of faith. While Jesus chose men as his closest disciples,<sup>43</sup> some women traveled with Jesus and were a part of the larger group of disciples (Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna). The story of Mary and Martha demonstrates that their role was beyond the domestic duties of hosting; they were encouraged to learn and evangelize. Most notably, they were the only disciples the gospels clearly state were present at Jesus' crucifixion and the only ones courageous enough to attend to His guarded body.<sup>44</sup> This gave them the honor to be the first witnesses of Jesus' resurrection.

Jesus' posture toward women flew in the face of the common Jewish and Greco-Roman context. He invited them to be more than simply "the help". He protected them and saw God's heart in the OT law as a protection for women.<sup>45</sup> Most importantly, in a world where women did not hold status, He saw them.

### **Examples in Acts and Paul**

The book of Acts and Paul's writing paint the best picture of how women functioned in the burgeoning church.

Women were in the upper room when the gift of the Holy Spirit fell at Pentecost (Acts 1:4). This would have placed them in the group teaching and proclaiming the gospel to the crowd through foreign tongues (Acts 2:1-13).

Numerous wealthy women became Patrons<sup>46</sup> of the house churches. They hosted gatherings, funded ministry endeavors, and, implied,<sup>47</sup> is that they had a role in overseeing the churches in their homes, as well as funding many of the churches and missionary endeavors. Women such as Mary (John Mark's Mother) (Acts 12:12), Lydia (Acts 16:14-15), and Nympha (Colossians 4:15).

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<sup>43</sup> This was important as a symbol of the twelve tribes of Israel who stemmed from Jacob's sons.

<sup>44</sup> The gospels vary on who was present at the cross. Mark makes it clear that twelve completely abandon Jesus when he is arrested (Mark 14:50), while John places John at Mary's side at the cross (John 19:26-27).

<sup>45</sup> Matthew 19:1-12.

<sup>46</sup> Patrons were heads of households.

<sup>47</sup> The extent of this is debated.

Women prophets, such as Philip's daughters (Acts 21:9), were responsible for authoritative spiritual leadership. As noted above, Paul instructs women on how to prophesy, implying their regularity in this role within his churches. Women, such as Prisca (Priscilla), played a role in the correction and teaching of known male leaders, such as Apollos, in Corinth (Acts 18:25, Romans 16:3).

While the roles of church leaders were in development, women were known to be Deacons. One such Deacon was Phoebe (Romans 16:1-2), who is thought to have carried and expounded on Paul's letter to the Romans to the church in Rome. Euodia and Syntyche, the women corrected by name in Philippians, are thought to be in higher levels of leadership because Paul specifically addresses them in the letter. Last is Junia, "well known among the apostles" (Romans 16:7). The thought is not that she is simply known by the apostles, but that she is one of the apostles.<sup>48</sup>

Throughout the NT, women can be found to have filled all known leadership positions in the Church except for elder, but this is not unique in that there are never any males named as elder either.

## Conclusions

When reading scripture, we do so contextually, through our modern lenses, and with our modern questions. Interpreting scripture is a contextual task, meaning that to understand what scripture is saying, we must understand both the details of the authors' world and our world. This brings "truth" to our cultural context, so we can interpret how to apply it today. This topic may be the most Biblically studied in our modern culture. The language of these passages has been lexically exhausted. They have been explored from various historical, social, and contextual perspectives, and the consensus is that there is no straightforward way to understand why Paul seems to limit the role of women in word but not in deed, outside of the fact that the Spirit led him to limit women in these settings for the specific reasons explored above.

Our context no longer limits women's roles to the domestic domain. We are a culture that invites women into the public sphere and celebrates their place there. It no longer creates a scandalous name for the Church to allow women to fill roles that they could fill in their secular settings. If Paul had lived in our cultural context, we believe that he would not only allow for churches to ordain women, but he would also advise it. The description in the NT are the roles women and men play. The prescription is the importance of order; living and operating in such a way as to keep a good name in society and to embody a kenotic ethic in the roles we are invited to play, all things we can do as a Church with women in the highest roles of authority.

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<sup>48</sup> This interpretation is highly contested. It was thought that this person was an apostle throughout much of interpretive history. Under this assumption, traditional interpreters had mistranslated her name to a male name (Junias). Once it was discovered that the earliest manuscripts contained Junia, a first-century woman's name, many complementarian scholars shifted the meaning of the second half of the verse. Again, under the assumption that there were no women apostles.

## Appendix 1: Resources

1. Books
  - a. *Two Views on Women in Ministry: Counterpoints: Bible and Theology* edited by James R. Beck and Stanley N. Gundry.
  - b. *Tell Her Story: How Women Led, Taught, and Ministered in the Early Church* by Nijay K. Gupta.
  - c. *The Making of Biblical Womanhood: How the Subjugation of Women Became Gospel Truth* by Beth Allison Barr.
  - d. *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism (Revised Edition)* edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem.
2. Websites & Blogs
  - a. [Theology in the Raw by Preston Sprinkle](#)
    - i. [“What Is “Biblical” Masculinity and Femininity?”](#)
    - ii. [12 Part Blog on Kephale](#)
  - b. [The Council On Biblical Manhood and Womanhood](#)
  - c. [The Center for Biblical Equality International](#)
    - i. [Priscilla Papers Academic Journal](#)
  - d. [Lucy Peppiatt, “Women and Worship in Paul’s Churches: Apostles, Prophets, and Teachers,” The Bible and Interpretation, September 2017.](#)
3. Podcasts
  - a. [Theology in the Raw by Preston Sprinkle.](#)
  - b. [The Biblical Thinker by Mike Winger.](#)
4. Other Sources
  - a. *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament* edited by G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren. Translated by John T. Willis.
  - b. *Dictionary of Paul and His Letters* edited by Gerald F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, and Daniel G. Reid.
  - c. *The New American Commentary on Genesis* by K. A. Matthews.
  - d. *Christian Theology: An Introduction* by Alexander E. McGrath.
  - e. Harm W. Hollander, “The Meaning of the Term ‘Law’ (Νόμος) in 1 Corinthians.” *Novum Testamentum*.
  - f. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* edited by William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich.
  - g. *Scripture and Its Interpretation: A Global, Ecumenical Introduction to the Bible* edited by Michael J. Gorman

## Appendix II: Rethinking Church Leadership Structures

When we examine the New Testament’s treatment of church leadership, one thing becomes increasingly clear, the Bible does not offer a singular, prescriptive structure for how leadership in the church must be organized. The first-century church existed in a vastly different cultural, social, and political world than the one we occupy today. The authors of the New Testament were not writing blueprints for 21st-century American church governance; they were offering Spirit-inspired guidance to communities of believers navigating a rapidly growing and often

persecuted movement. Notably, Jesus and Paul did not lay out a hierarchical structure with formal titles and offices for churches to follow. There is no organizational chart handed down from heaven. Instead, what we see is a relational, Spirit-led model of leadership grounded in character, service, and gifting rather than rank or title. The modern debate over what titles women can or cannot hold in the church is, therefore, less about biblical fidelity and more about the weight of tradition. When we turn to the Scriptures themselves, we find far more emphasis on function, maturity, and mutual submission than on rigid roles defined by gender or institutional status.

### **A Strategic Model, Not a Scriptural Mandate**

The church structure most common in modern America—with senior pastors, elder boards, deacons, hierarchical staff roles, and defined leadership pathways—is a model we have developed to best facilitate the mission of the church in our time and culture. It is not commanded in Scripture. It is a strategy. Therefore, to label this structure as inherently “biblical” or “unbiblical” misses the point. It’s simply a tool, and like any tool, its effectiveness should be measured by how well it helps us fulfill the mission Christ gave us—the Great Commission (*Matthew 28:18–20*).

In the New Testament, leadership terms such as **episkopos** (overseer), **presbyteros** (elder), **poimēn** (shepherd/pastor), and **diakonos** (deacon/servant) are often used interchangeably or in overlapping ways, reflecting a functional and relational model of leadership rather than a rigid, hierarchical one.

For example, in Acts 20:17, Paul calls for the “elders” (presbyteroi) of the church in Ephesus. Then, in Acts 20:28, he tells these same men that the Holy Spirit has made them “overseers” (episkopoi) and commands them to “shepherd” (poimainein) the church of God. All three terms—elder, overseer, and shepherd—are applied to the same group, highlighting their overlapping responsibilities.

In Titus 1:5–9, Paul instructs Titus to appoint “elders” (presbyteroi) in every town and then immediately describes the qualifications for an “overseer” (episkopos), again indicating the roles are not distinct offices but different descriptions of the same function.

1 Peter 5:1–4 also illustrates this blending. Peter exhorts the “elders” (presbyteroi) among the believers to “shepherd” (poimainein) the flock of God and to exercise “oversight” (episkopeo), showing once more that leadership was described by role and responsibility, not rigid titles.

The term diakonos (deacon or servant) appears both as a general description and as a specific office. In Philippians 1:1, Paul greets the “overseers and deacons” of the church, showing both were recognized roles. In Romans 16:1, he refers to Phoebe as a diakonos of the church in Cenchreae, using the same word he uses of himself in 1 Corinthians 3:5 and 2 Corinthians 6:4. Clearly, ministry and leadership were defined more by service and function than title.

These passages demonstrate that early church leadership was relational, Spirit-led, and based on calling and gifting rather than formal hierarchy. Leadership roles emerged out of community,

need, and spiritual maturity—not organizational charts. This flexibility should shape how we understand and implement leadership in the church today.

Modern leadership structures—such as models where Elders oversee Lead Pastors, who oversee other Pastors, who then oversee Directors or Ministry Leaders—are neither inherently biblical nor unbiblical. They are simply strategic frameworks developed to help churches function in specific cultural and organizational contexts. These models can be helpful when they foster clarity, accountability, and healthy stewardship of people and resources. But they should never be mistaken as the only—or the divinely mandated—way to lead the church.

When we recognize that the New Testament doesn't give us a rigid template but, instead, emphasizes principles like servanthood, mutual submission, discernment, and Spirit-empowered leadership, we are freed to design structures that fit our mission and values. What matters most is that our systems support spiritual growth, shared responsibility, and the flourishing of every member's gifts—not that they mimic traditional hierarchies or titles. The goal isn't to preserve a certain structure but to be faithful to the heart of how Jesus led and how the early church operated.

### **The Real Question: Can Women Lead?**

Given that the New Testament does not prescribe a singular church leadership model, the debate about whether women can be pastors or elders often focuses too narrowly on titles. The more essential question is: Can women be leaders in the church? And to that question, Scripture gives a resounding yes.

### **Old Testament Examples**

Throughout the Old Testament, God appointed and affirmed women in positions of leadership and spiritual authority:

- Deborah (Judges 4–5) was a judge, prophetess, and military leader—clearly exercising both civil and spiritual leadership over Israel.
- Miriam (Exodus 15:20) was a prophetess and co-leader with Moses and Aaron during Israel's deliverance from Egypt.
- Huldah (2 Kings 22:14–20) was a prophetess consulted by King Josiah's officials when the Book of the Law was found. Her interpretation and confirmation of God's word guided a national revival.

These women were not anomalies; they were part of God's plan to lead His people in specific times and places.

### **New Testament Evidence**

The New Testament continues the pattern of affirming women in leadership roles within the church:

- Phoebe (Romans 16:1–2) is called a diakonos (deacon) of the church in Cenchreae. Paul also refers to her as a prostatis—a benefactor or leader—who has helped many, including himself.
- Junia (Romans 16:7) is described as “outstanding among the apostles.” While some have tried to argue Junia was a man or not truly called an apostle, the overwhelming scholarly consensus confirms Junia was a woman, and that Paul acknowledged her apostolic role.

- Priscilla (Acts 18:26; Romans 16:3) is consistently mentioned alongside her husband Aquila, often even before him, which may indicate a prominent teaching or leadership role. She helped instruct Apollos, an educated man, in the way of God more accurately.
- Euodia and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2–3) are two women Paul urges to be united in spirit. He says they “labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers.” Paul uses the same language he applies to his closest ministry companions, placing these women in the same category as male co-laborers in gospel work.
- Women as co-workers – Paul greets numerous women in Romans 16 who labored with him in ministry: Mary, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis, and others. He uses the same Greek word (*kopiaō* – to labor or work hard) to describe their ministry as he does for male coworkers.

Additionally, in Acts 2:17–18, Peter quotes the prophet Joel to explain the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost:

*“In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people.  
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,  
your young men will see visions,  
your old men will dream dreams.  
Even on my servants, both men and women,  
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,  
and they will prophesy.”*

The outpouring of the Spirit is for all believers, empowering both men and women to proclaim and lead in the name of Jesus.

### **Titles vs. Function**

The early church was less concerned with titles and more concerned with function. Leadership wasn’t about a formal office or job description—it was about calling, gifting, and faithful service to the body of Christ. The modern church has sometimes elevated the importance of roles and titles beyond what Scripture emphasizes. The church would benefit from returning to prioritize how someone functions over what title they carry.

### **Conclusion**

The debate over women in church leadership often becomes a debate over church titles. But the deeper issue is whether we recognize, affirm, and release Spirit-empowered women to lead as God calls them. The Bible, especially the New Testament, gives substantial evidence that women served as leaders, teachers, prophets, deacons, and apostles.

Our current church structure is a human-designed strategy—one that can and should evolve to reflect biblical values, cultural context, and the needs of the mission. If we believe that leadership in the church is about stewarding influence for the sake of the Gospel, then we must also believe that women—called and equipped by the Spirit—belong in leadership just as men do.

Let us not limit what God has made clear. Leadership is not about gender—it's about calling, character, and obedience to the Spirit's leading.

**Addendum: How This Looks at The Tree Church**

At The Tree Church, we have structured our leadership system around calling and gifting, not gender. The titles we use are meant to provide clarity in function, not to create barriers or hierarchies based on tradition.

If someone is gifted in assisting with administrative tasks, they may be hired as an Assistant. If someone has strong leadership qualities, excels in building teams, and helps develop systems and structures, we call them a Director.

We also have a role we call Pastor. At our church, pastors teach, officiate weddings and funerals, engage in church discipline, and help shape the spiritual direction of the church in support of the Lead Pastor. Functionally, we could call them "Shepherding Directors" – and honestly, that might have made things less controversial and confusing!

We also have Elders. Elders oversee the overall direction of the church under the leadership of the Lead Pastor. Elders are selected for their wisdom and ability to discern both business and spiritual matters.

So, while there are significant similarities between our Directors, Pastors, and Elders, the titles we use reflect specific strategic roles within our ministry structure. Our goal is to honor God, empower people, and pursue our mission with clarity and unity—not tradition for tradition's sake. Honestly, I wish that when I became Lead Pastor, I had chosen terms that simply reflected function rather than ones deeply rooted in biblical language that has been shaped—and often distorted—by tradition. Instead of using titles like Pastor, Elder, or Bishop, I would have preferred terms like Director, Spiritual Caregiver, Manager, Executive Leader, or Board. I believe it would have brought greater clarity and less confusion about authority, responsibility, and purpose within our team and to those we serve.