

# The Role of Women at The Orchard

## Introduction

God created two complementary sexes—male and female—to bear His image together (Gen. 1:27–28; Matt. 19:4; Mark 10:6). Gender is an essential part of personhood and reflects God’s design. Men and women are equal in essence, dignity, and value, yet distinct and complementary by divine design. These distinctions are not cultural constructs but part of God’s created order.

Because both sexes share in divine image-bearing, God intends for men and women to have different yet complementary roles in the church and home. These distinctions are for God’s glory, our joy, and human flourishing (Gen. 2:18–25; 1 Cor. 11:2–16; Eph. 5:22–33; 1 Tim. 2:8–15).

The Orchard seeks to articulate and embody a theological vision of complementarianism that honors Scripture and provides opportunities for women to flourish in ministry.

## Gender and the Role of Women in Scripture

Our understanding begins with the conviction that the Bible is God’s inspired, authoritative Word (Ps. 19:7–11; 2 Tim. 3:16). Any understanding of gender must begin with God’s revelation.

## Shared Mission

All Christians—men and women—are called to the Great Commission and to participate in the ministry of the church. Scripture assumes and celebrates women serving in ministry:

- Jesus welcomed and taught women (Luke 10:39; 8:1–3).
- Older women are called to teach younger women (Titus 2:3–5).
- Phoebe served as a deacon and supported Paul’s ministry (Rom. 16:1–2).
- Euodia and Syntyche labored with Paul in the gospel (Phil. 4:3).
- Priscilla helped explain the way of God to Apollos (Acts 18:26).

Men and women labor together for the kingdom (1 Cor. 12:4–31). When both sexes are not empowered to use their gifts, the mission of the church suffers.

## **Primary Relationship: Brothers and Sisters**

The New Testament presents siblinghood as the primary relational framework between Christian men and women. The church is a family, and men and women relate as brothers and sisters—marked by honor, care, and sacrificial love.

## **Distinct Roles**

While men and women are equal, Scripture reserves the office of elder/pastor for qualified men.

Elders are responsible for:

- Leading and overseeing the church (1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:7)
- Preaching and teaching (1 Tim. 3:2; 2 Tim. 4:2)
- Guarding doctrine (Acts 20:28–31)
- Shepherding and caring for the flock (1 Pet. 5:1–2)

Apart from the office of elder, Scripture encourages women to participate fully in the ministry of the church.

## **Affirmations and Denials**

### **Human Dignity**

- **Affirm:** Men and women are created in God’s image and share equal dignity.
- **Deny:** Neither gender has greater worth or dignity.

### **Partnership in Ministry**

- **Affirm:** Both men and women are needed for the health of the church.
- **Deny:** The church cannot flourish if one gender is marginalized.

## **Eldership**

- **Affirm:** The office of elder is reserved for qualified men.
- **Deny:** Withholding eldership from women diminishes their value or influence.

## **Submission**

- **Affirm:** All Christians submit to elders and ultimately to Christ.
- **Deny:** Women are not subject to all men; biblical submission does not imply inferiority.

## **Complementarianism**

- **Affirm:** Rightly practiced, complementarianism leads to flourishing for both sexes.
- **Deny:** Any form of complementarianism that results in abuse, subjugation, or neglect.

## **Singleness**

- **Affirm:** Single men and women are full participants in the life of the church.
- **Deny:** Singleness diminishes one's role or authority; single men do not hold authority over single women.

## **Ministry at The Orchard**

### **Professional/Organizational Roles**

The roles of lead pastor are reserved for elders/qualified men. All other roles are open to both men and women, allowing women to serve at every level of the organization except elder.

### **The Gathering**

All members participate in weekend worship. All roles are open to men and women except:

- Preaching the Word
- Officiating the ordinances (baptism and the Lord's Supper)

Members may baptize and distribute communion elements, but preaching and officiating are reserved for elders.

## **Teaching Environments**

Mixed-gender teaching environments are overseen by elders and led by qualified men, who should equip and utilize gifted men and women. Gender-specific environments are taught by leaders of the same gender.

## **Groups in Various Ministries**

- Gender-specific groups are led by leaders of the same gender.
- Mixed-gender groups are co-led by a man and a woman.
- Co-leadership reflects complementary gifting, not interchangeability.
- Both men and women may serve as group coaches, ministers, and leaders.