

## Women in Ministry

When examining the role of women in church leadership, specifically as pastors, it helps us to consider the works of contemporary scholars like Dr. Gordon D. Fee, Dr. Lucy Peppiatt, and Dr. Andrew Rillera. Their research provides a solid foundation that women ought to serve as pastors & leaders.

### 1. Reinterpreting key passages:

Gordon D. Fee (Ph.D. University of Southern California), a respected New Testament scholar, argues in his works that some commonly cited passages against women in leadership have been misinterpreted. In particular, his examination of **1 Corinthians 14:34-35** and **1 Timothy 2:11-15** reveals that these passages should be understood in their cultural and historical context, and not as universal prohibitions. For instance, in "[Listening to the Spirit in the Text](#)," Fee suggests that Paul's instructions in 1 Corinthians are meant to address a specific issue of disorderly conduct in the church, rather than imposing a blanket ban on women's participation in church activities. This is further verified by Paul creating new words to describe women leaders in the Church (i.e., deaconess) that didn't exist before in Greek or Hebrew culture. Some argue Paul only held that women could only "serve, not teach" since deacon means "to serve". There are some objections to this, which we will cover in what follows.

### 2. Highlighting the role of women in Pauline communities:

In her book "[Unveiling Paul's Women](#)," Lucy Peppiatt (Ph.D. University of Otago) delves into the roles women played in the early church as revealed in Paul's letters. You can [listen to it here](#) instead of reading, and there's a second one [here](#) if you like the first one. Peppiatt demonstrates that women held significant leadership roles in the church, such as Phoebe (**Romans 16:1-2**), who is referred to as a "deacon" and a "benefactor" in the church at Cenchreae. Priscilla (also known as Prisca) is another example; she, along with her husband Aquila, played a key role in teaching and mentoring Apollos, a prominent Christian teacher (**Acts 18:24-26**). These examples show that women were actively engaged in leadership roles in the early church, which supports the argument that they should be able to serve as pastors today. This is further shown in **Romans 16:7**, with the Apostle named Junia. You can read more about her [here](#). An Apostle was a teacher, preacher, and church planter, and Paul gives her that title. For most of history Christian translators refused to translate the name "Junia", instead translating "Junias" (a masculine version of the name). They did this even though no name "Junias" exists in Greek or Roman culture, because they were convinced a woman could not have been an Apostle in the early church.

### 3. Understanding the concept of "headship":

Andrew Rillera, (Ph.D. Duke University), has contributed to the discussion of "headship" in [Ephesians 5:22-33](#) and [1 Corinthians 11:2-16](#). He argues [here](#), that the word γάρ (Greek "for") signifies a quotation of Paul's opponents (not Paul's thought himself). This word is used as brackets or quotation marks in 1 Corinthians in particular, which would also explain why Paul seems to contradict himself in that passage. In short, **1 Corinthians 11:3-15** should be pictured as a bracketed quote of someone else. Verse 16 provides Paul's response to that person. In her [work](#) (only 100 pages), Dr. Lucy Peppiatt challenges the traditional interpretation of these passages as advocating a hierarchical structure that excludes women from leadership roles. Instead, she contends that "headship" should be understood in terms of servanthood and mutual submission. This interpretation suggests that both men and women are called to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ (**Ephesians 5:21**). Peppiatt's perspective on "headship" supports the idea that women can serve as pastors, as it emphasizes the equality of all believers in Christ. This could be further supported by Paul's idea that, "...there is no more male or female," (**Galatians 3:28**) not meaning that gender is abolished, but the mutual curses from the fall (**Gen. 3**) on both genders have been reversed in Christ so that men and women can be all God created them to be in their uniqueness. God equalized, without making neuter, our genders through the work of Christ.

### 4. Galatians 3:28:

One of the key biblical passages supporting the case for women serving as pastors is [Galatians 3:28](#), (as mentioned above) where Paul states, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." This verse emphasizes the unity and equality of all believers in Christ, regardless of their gender. By emphasizing this passage, scholars like Fee, Peppiatt, and Rillera argue that there should be no distinction between men and women when it comes to serving in leadership roles within the church.

Contemporary evangelical scholars like Gordon D. Fee, Lucy Peppiatt, and Andrew Rillera provide a persuasive argument for women serving as pastors by reinterpreting key biblical passages, highlighting the role of women in Pauline communities, providing a nuanced understanding of "headship," and emphasizing the equality of all believers in Christ. Their research helps to support the position that women should be able to serve as pastors within the evangelical tradition.

**Summary:** With all of this in mind, we hold that women have full standing in positions of leadership, pastoring, and serving in Christ's Kingdom. We hold grace for those who struggle with this idea, but we support without reservation our sisters in Christ as they carry out the commission given to them by the Holy Spirit.