

Biblical & Theological Statement on the Roles of Men & Women in the Church

Introduction

Conversations about the roles of men and women in the church are challenging. We tend to enter them with different starting points that inevitably influence our conclusions far more than we think. Some of us want to prioritize the conversation around *authority*, thinking if we could all just see the patterns of authority throughout the Bible, we could set the record straight. So we quickly point to the examples of male leadership in the Old Testament, the male requirement for elders in the New Testament, and the roles of husbands to lead the family. But while the Bible does discuss different realms of authority, it also stresses *humility*. The greatest picture of leadership and authority in the Bible is seen in Jesus as He lovingly lays down his power for the benefit of others.¹

Others want to prioritize these conversations around *equality*, and there *is* a high value for equality in the Scriptures. As we will see, Paul understands as a foundational biblical truth that God created all humanity in his image, which means all people *are* equal in worth, dignity, and value. At no point does Paul, or any other biblical author, indicate that one group is more valuable than another. He wrote two of his letters to make that very point!² And yet, while we may want to talk about equality, the Bible consistently draws its readers beyond equality to *unity*.³ To miss this is to miss the beautiful truth that the gospel is wonderfully inclusive for all people.

These two starting points generally end up leading us to one of two sides of thinking about the roles of men and women in the church. These sides are commonly known as complementarianism⁴ and egalitarianism.⁵ There are godly men and women who land on either side of this discussion, and to be sure, the difference between an egalitarian and complementarian is not biblical literacy.⁶ While not an issue that determines one's salvation, it nonetheless has significant implications. Not practiced well, either position can lead to painful

¹ Drawn out from Jesus' humble incarnation in Philippians 2:5-8.

² Both the letter of Romans and Galatians deal with this issue of superiority; Gentile superiority in the former and Jewish in the latter.

³ See Galatians 3:27-28, where equality is certainly talked about, but the emphasis is on unity. "You are all *one* in Christ Jesus".

⁴ This starting point will lead to a position known as Complementarianism. Complementarians believe that God created complementary roles for men and women in the church and home. These roles are not based on skill or value, but the beauty of God's design and intention in creation.

⁵ Egalitarians believe all roles in the church and home are open to both men and women. Moreover, any comments that Paul makes about the role of women in his letters are understood to be isolated instructions to specific churches and not universal principles to be applied today.

⁶ Though, to be sure, some who hold either position will be there by default and not through careful study of the Word.

distortions of the gospel and do far more harm than good. We, as the church, find ourselves in a critical cultural moment in which we must think carefully and biblically about this issue. While we no doubt benefit from the faithful Christians who have thought about this topic in the past, we cannot simply hang on to the theological coat-tails of those who have come before us without working to understand the Scriptures for ourselves. We believe this conversation is an important one, with which every church ought to wrestle. While we may end up disagreeing with other believers on this issue, it does not mean we cannot have meaningful fellowship within the Body and continue to serve Jesus together.

We believe the biblical complementarian position we hold at Park Community Church should cause the flourishing of both men and women- celebrating the divinely inspired, good differences that God has created. And yet, we must acknowledge that complementarianism has been both misunderstood and misapplied in ways that have sometimes fostered authoritarianism within a church or home. Any kind of abusive posture that is justified using the Bible grossly fails to live up to the Bible's teaching and calls for rejection and immediate correction! As believers we are called to adopt the posture of Jesus-servants who consider the needs of others above our own (Mark 10:43-45, Philippians 2:3-4).

The bulk of this document will focus on the biblical foundation for *our* position and offer a rationale for its application in the local and church-wide context. As you read, we invite you to do so with an open Bible and an open mind to consider what Scripture teaches about the roles of men and women in the church.

Purpose, Scope, Method, & Challenges

Purpose

The question we are asking and seeking to expound upon is: How does God intend men and women to function and flourish in the Kingdom of God? Our purpose is to examine the relevant biblical texts concerning this topic, clarify the position of Park Community Church, and explore the implications of our position.

Scope

While demonstrating and setting forth the complementarian view, we will also have moments of engaging with egalitarian views. Our goal in those engagements will be to represent the egalitarian camp fairly and clearly while sharing why we hold to our position. We do not

attempt to provide a full discourse on every passage from Scripture related to this topic,⁷ but rather will focus on the key passages which provide a direct framework for the conversation. At the end of this statement, you will also find a Bibliography that will provide additional resources for potential further study.

Method

The Church-Wide Elder Team invited three women members of Park with graduate degrees in biblical studies and three Park pastors/elders to take part in writing this statement. As a team, we spent significant time examining the Scriptures together and talking through how to express our findings in a way that is biblical, consistent, and applicable to our current cultural context. While all members contributed to the entirety of the paper, each section had a primary author and therefore reflects the diversity of the team.

At Park, we believe the Bible is the authoritative Word of God, and the final authority in all matters of faith and practice, therefore we bend our lives and opinions towards what the Bible teaches, not the other way around. Furthermore, we believe that the Bible does not contradict itself. So, when we found passages that are seemingly in conflict, we worked towards an interpretation that best resolved the tension. Recognizing we do not have exclusive rights to perfect interpretations, we have worked hard to be as faithful to the Bible's teachings as possible and have read from a wide array of opinions and perspectives to consider this topic from many angles.⁸

Challenges

One of the most significant challenges is that we must make decisions about whether or not the biblical author is talking about a cultural issue or a universal issue. For example, when Paul talks about head coverings in 1 Corinthians 11, is he talking about something that should be required *only* for the church in Corinth, a confined cultural issue in the first-century church, or is this a command he intends to be followed by *all* Christians throughout all time?

Certainly, there *are* cultural issues the Bible addresses, but determining which are cultural and which are universal is not an easy task. As we worked through the particular passages below, we identified *how* and *why* we believed a passage was either cultural or universal. In passages

⁷ There are many well researched books which provide a greater level of exegetical detail. You will find our Bibliography and recommended reading list at the end of this document, many of which go into greater detail in the passages covered in this paper as well as other relevant material.

⁸ That is to say, we did not only read authors who already agree with what we believe, but have wanted to do justice to the egalitarian position; not cherry-picking outliers.

we believed to be addressing a cultural issue, we have tried to articulate the underlying biblical principle applicable for us today.

Highlighting Women in the Scripture

We start with looking back at how God has utilized women in the past for his purposes, as a reminder to the reader that God will do what He has always done. The kind of people that God chose to use in the past are the kind of people God will continue to use in the future. The pages of Scripture are filled with examples of God pushing the cultural envelope to encourage, embolden, and empower women.

God used the shrewdness of a young woman, Jael, to decisively destroy the enemy leader of Israel by driving a tent peg through his temple (Judges 4)! He used the wisdom and discernment of Abigail to sway the sudden and compulsive anger of King David as she called him to faithful obedience to the Lord (1 Samuel 25). In the spectacular courage of Esther, God demonstrated his desire to use women for the sake of all his people! Foreshadowing Jesus, she put her life on the line, speaking the truth and changing policy for the glory of God (Esther 5). Mary practiced a profoundly radical faith when she immediately received the message from the angel demonstrating to one generation after another, what it looks like to receive the Word of the Lord and live by it (Luke 1)!

We could talk of the nearly 70 women Luke addresses in the Gospel of Luke and Acts. We could study the storylines of Lydia, Pricilla, Euodia, Syntyche, and Phoebe (to name a few), all of whom had significant influence in the early church. However, for the sake of brevity, we will say that the history of God's people is filled with the stories of women who are nothing less than heroes of the faith worthy of imitation by all who follow Christ.

Not only have women played an integral part in the Scriptures and in much of church history, but many women have faithfully given themselves to serve and build Park Community Church into what it is today. We cannot look at the Scriptures, at church history, or even at our own story and not see that God has been powerfully at work through the wisdom, leadership and gifts of women to help accomplish God's mission in Chicago and throughout the world.

Exegesis of Critical Passages

There are several critical passages that directly address the topics of manhood and womanhood. As we consider these passages, we will include a brief explanation of the passage, engage opposing viewpoints and apply principles for our modern context.

Genesis

Much of the New Testament writing on the roles of men and women in the church directly or indirectly refers back to the Genesis narrative, therefore it is important for us to understand the first three chapters of Genesis which give us keen insight into God's design for men and women. In Genesis 1 we get a glimpse into God's creation of man and woman and learn of the unique role they were to play as overseers of his creation. In Genesis 2 we observe the first marriage relationship between Adam and Eve, and in Genesis 3 we learn about the consequences of sin, and how it affects all relationships.

Genesis 1:26-28

26 "Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them 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." 27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. 28 And God blessed them. And God said to them, "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."" (ESV)

Genesis 1:26-28 is the creation summary establishing that God created both male and female in his image and likeness before the fall, which means we *"are like God and represent God"*.⁹ In the first five days of creation, each day began with God speaking the words, *"Let there be,"* and ended with the statement, *"it was good,"* but on the sixth day, God breaks that pattern. He began by saying, *"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness,"* and ended with, *"it was very good."* The difference points to the unique status of man and woman in all of God's creation. They not only represented God as image bearers, but are the apex of God's creation.

⁹ Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine*. (Grand Rapids: Intervarsity Press, 2009), 442.

In Genesis 1, the word “man” (āḏām) does not merely refer to an individual but is the term used to represent all of humanity. God created humanity in his image, male and female, and he told them, “*be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion.*” In other words, the man and the woman together were commissioned by God to build society and exercise authority over God’s creation. Genesis 1:26-28 affirms that the distinct sexes of God’s creation are equal in dignity, worth, and value. Therefore, there is no place in God’s created order for any sense of male or female superiority or oppression.

Further Notes/Counterpoints

1. Throughout church history there have been a number of attempts to explain the use of the plural for God’s self-reference in this passage when He says, “*Let us make man in our image.*” One historically consistent understanding is that this is a reference to the Trinitarian nature of God found in Scripture (one God in three persons - Father, Son, Holy Spirit). Each person of the Trinity is fully God in being, and yet distinct in their roles and relationships to one another. The reason this is an important note in the study of this passage is because it is precisely this ‘one and distinct’ characteristic of the Trinitarian Godhead that we see on display within human marriage. Similar to the Trinity, a marriage has two equal and distinct partners who differ in function within the relationship.

Genesis 2:18-25

18 “Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” 19 Now out of the ground the LORD God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens 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 livestock and to the birds of the heavens and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper fit for him. 21 So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept 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; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.” 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.” (ESV)

In this passage we see God reflecting on his creation, and pronouncing everything that he has created to be good, except for one thing: the man does not have a suitable companion. God says, “*It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.*” At the very beginning in God’s perfect world before the fall, man is in deep need of a partner- a companion

for life, and so God gives him a “helper”. The term “helper” is one of great significance. Throughout Scripture God is often referred to as Israel's helper (Exodus 18:4, Deuteronomy 33:7). It is not surprising therefore that God in making humanity as image bearers creates Eve as one who uniquely reflects divine attributes. This passage tells us that the woman is man's indispensable partner, a necessary ally who according to Gen. 2:18 is “fit” for him, indicating a complementary relationship between the man and the woman.

In verses 21-22, the man was put into a deep sleep, and the woman was fashioned out of the side of man. The woman being taken from the man's side shows that she was of the same substance as the man and underscores the unity of the human family having one source. Adam recognized that Eve was part of him— they were in fact “one flesh.” The term “one flesh” means that just as our bodies are one whole entity and cannot be divided into pieces and still be a whole, so it was to be in marriage. The one-flesh marriage relationship was God's idea. Before the Fall He intended a powerful life-giving relationship where man and woman would care for each other, where there would be total vulnerability without fear or shame and they would live complementary with one another.

Further Notes/Counterpoints

1. Derek Kidner commenting on this passage writes, “The New Testament draws much of its teaching on the sexes from this crowning paragraph of the chapter, which is the dynamic, or dramatic, counterpart of 1:27, 28. The naming of the animals, a scene which portrays man as monarch of all he surveys, poignantly reveals him as a social being, made for fellowship, not power: he will not live until he loves, giving himself away to another on his own level. So the woman is presented wholly as his partner and counterpart; nothing is yet said of her as child bearer. She is valued for herself alone.”¹⁰

2. To read modern anthropology is often to engage with alternative tellings of history. On the topic of marriage, many modern anthropologists believe marriage to be a later advancement in the human race, one developed by man in order to bring order to new forms of civilization. The Bible stands in stark contrast. Marriage, far from a man-made development, is a Divinely inspired creation meant for humanity's good and God's glory.

3. In the Genesis account of creation Adam was given the responsibility of naming every one of God's creatures. As the passage shows above, Adam's final act of naming was when he gave the title, “Woman,” to Eve, “...*she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.*” Complementarians often cite Adam's naming of Eve as a strong support for Adam's authority

¹⁰ Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary*, vol. 1, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1967), 70.

over Eve. The argument is that just as Adam was given authority over the animals and then permitted to name them, so was he given authority over the woman and then told to name her. Thus the process of naming becomes a sign of authority. Egalitarians often counter this argument by rightly stating that nowhere in the Scriptures do we see clear teaching that naming something requires authority over it. As Linda Belleville says to name something in the Old Testament, "was not an act of control or power."¹¹ Belleville's statement is true - there are no particular verses linking naming and authority. We believe this argument, while helpful, is not the strongest support of complementarianism and therefore have chosen to simply include the discussion here as a note rather than part of the main line of reason.

Genesis 3:14-19

14 "The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all the days of your life. 15 I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel." 16 To the woman he said, "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be contrary to your husband, but he shall rule over you." 17 And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in pain 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, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return." (ESV)

In the third chapter of Genesis we are introduced to the curses placed on both Eve and Adam as a result of their fall into sin. Adam and Eve's disobedience affected all creation. These judgments are vital for understanding the world as we know it today and the difficulties we often encounter.

Eve's judgment has two components, pain in childbirth, and a desire to rule over her husband. In verse 16 we see the reality that pain in childbirth would multiply, serving as a constant reminder to us that we have no remedy for our fallen condition and the pain that sin brings apart from divine grace. We are also told a change takes place in Eve's relationship to her husband. From this point forward Eve would desire her husband. Some have taken this to mean to *desire sexually*. This interpretation does not capture the sense of the way the word is used in this passage, nor is it supported by the broader use of the term *desire* in the following chapters.

¹¹Linda L Belleville, "Women in Ministry: An Egalitarian Perspective," in *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, ed. Stanley N. Gundry and James R. Beck (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 28.

Rather, the sense of the word *desire* is that the woman will seek to ‘control’ her husband. This interpretation is supported by its immediate context stating that the husband will *rule over* her. Interestingly, this language of *desiring* and *ruling over* is directly connected with the language used of Cain in Genesis 4:7 where God tells Cain, “Sin is crouching at the door. Its *desire* is for you, but you must *rule over* it.” A careful examination of the Hebrew demonstrates an incredible parallel between these two passages which helps us to understand its meaning in Genesis 3:16. As a result of the fall there will be competition in marriage for leadership, but God’s design is for man to assume humble headship and lovingly lead his family. As John Collins says, “The ‘ruling’ of Adam over Eve is the proper remedy, a return to the creational pattern of man’s leadership, loving not dominating.”¹²

Adam was also found guilty and told by God, “... Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust, and to dust you shall return.” Adam’s command to work the ground and cultivate the creation that God had made would now be an exercise of toil and struggle, as the environment in which he performed his work had been drastically changed. There would not only be weeds, but competition, oppression and a lust for more would infect the good purpose God ordained for his creation to cultivate and keep. And not only that, but death was introduced, as the only logical result of having cut ourselves off from our lifesource by going our own way.

However, we find the first glimpse of the gospel in Genesis 3:15. As God pronounces judgment on the serpent, he points ahead to the saving work of Christ through atonement. The enemy of our souls will strike a temporary hit, but the Savior will deal a decisive blow, and in turn will begin to undo all the bad which has been done. Men and women will be empowered to turn back to God’s original design of self-sacrifice for one another. And man’s work, while still having many challenges, will have a restored significance in bringing God glory through utilizing, designing and up-keeping his good creation.

New Testament Passages

We believe that God’s complementarian design for human relationships is consistent throughout the entire Bible, from Genesis through Revelation. While many additional Old Testament passages, beyond Genesis, could serve as discussion points for the conversation, we believe it is the following New Testament passages that provide particular insight for life in the

¹² John C. Collins. *Genesis 1-4: A Linguistic, Literary, and Theological Commentary* (Phillipsburg: P & R Pub, 2006), 160.

New Testament Church. The following selection of New Testament passages are not an exhaustive list, but rather highlight the critical passages within the New Testament that directly inform our understanding of Complementarianism. The order of the passages we have selected for review are presented here not in the order they appear in the Bible, but rather in an order which helps the reader engage meaningfully with the topic.

1 Timothy 2:8-15

8 "I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; 9 likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, 10 but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works. 11 Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. 12 I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. 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—if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control." (ESV)

The heart of this passage is that God's people, both men and women, are called to honor God in the way they conduct themselves during times of corporate worship. Clear, gender-specific principles are provided. Importantly, these principles are rooted in the Genesis account of creation as we see in verse 13, *"For Adam was formed first, then Eve."* In other words, the gender differences presented in this passage are not a result of the Fall, but were present at creation. Arguing from an egalitarian perspective, some state that Paul's instruction for women to "remain quiet" was a response to a very local issue at the time and was not intended to be a universal prohibition to be practiced by all churches at all times. However, in this passage Paul roots his reasoning for his instructions in God's created order in Genesis, far outside of any local issue he was dealing with at the time. By appealing to God's created order, Paul laid down universal principles applicable in all the churches of God. This is supported also by verse 8 which begins the entire set of instructions by saying, *"I desire that in every place..."*

In this passage, men are reminded to pray in a way that is not argumentative or quarrelsome. This advice is a rebuke of any attempt to bring pride or one upmanship into the gathered assembly. Men ought to pray and worship God with their hearts and their bodies *"lifting holy hands"*, as they demonstrate their love for God by bringing their whole selves into worship. Women are exhorted to dress modestly in the gathered assembly in order to not draw attention to themselves. Rather, they are to dress themselves with humility and good works in

order to draw attention to God and his work in their lives. Verse 11 says, women are to learn quietly with all submissiveness. It's important to note that contextually, the call for women to be *invited* into the gathering at this time and to learn alongside men shattered the notion of their day that women were not to be students of the doctrines of God. Leon Morris notes, "*The Jews regarded it as a sin to teach a woman, and the position was not much better elsewhere... It is not noticed as frequently as it should be, that Christianity from the very first assumed that women would learn as freely as men (cf. Luke 10:39–42).*"¹³ Christianity created new space for women to thrive as those entrusted with the truths of Scripture, further substantiated by those women who followed and supported Jesus' earthly ministry (Luke 8:2-3, Mark 15:41). The Greek term translated *quiet* [hēsychia] emphasizes the humble attitude and teachable spirit with which women were to learn. Paul was not requiring total silence, but rather a spirit prepared to learn.

In verse 12 we believe that God reveals two functions within the local church family that are specifically reserved for qualified male leadership, that of *teaching* and *exercising authority*. This makes sense considering the very next passage outlines the role and qualifications of elders in the church (1 Tim. 3:1-7). Paul uses the created order in Genesis to support his reasoning for male leadership within the church.

Verse 15 says that women "will be saved through childbearing." This has caused much debate among translators, but one thing they all agree on is that Paul's point was *not* that women would receive justification for sin through childbearing. This would not only run counter to all of Paul's teaching that salvation is a gift of grace received through faith (Eph. 2:8-10), but also does not fit contextually within the passage concerning roles in the church. Rather, we believe this verse reminds women that having and raising children in a godly home and living lives that model godliness is a blessing.¹⁴

Further Notes/Counterpoints

1. The prohibition that women were not to "have authority over" a man uses the rare Greek term (authenteō). As Lea and Thomas suggest, "*This rare word (authenteō) occurs here only in the New Testament, and its meaning is greatly disputed. The best evidence suggests that it refers to the authority a teacher has over those who are learning.*"¹⁵

2. The phrase "to teach or exercise authority" has some debate as to the proper translation. Some state the two verbs should be combined into one idea so as to read, "to teach in a way

¹³ Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1985), 193.

¹⁴ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin. *1, 2 Timothy, Titus* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 102.

¹⁵ Thomas D. Lea and Hayne P. Griffin, *1, 2 Timothy, Titus*, vol. 34, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1992), 99.

that exercises authority." While others, such as the ESV translations, maintain the separation of the two verbs.¹⁶ We feel the best evidence suggests the two verbs stay separate, but that either understanding/interpretation points to the same conclusion: The work of doctrinal teaching before the gathered church and exerting authority through the role of eldership is to be reserved for qualified male elders.

3. The Greek contains the linking particle (de) between verses 11 and 12. The significance of this linking particle is that it joins the prohibitions contained in verse 12 to the command of verse 11. Doug Moo suggests the best understanding of these verses might read as follows, "Let the women learn... with full submission; but (de) 'full submission' means also that I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man.

4. In verse 14, Paul is not excusing Adam for his part in the fall. On the contrary, in his letter to the Romans, Paul places the blame for humanity's sinful nature on Adam (Romans 5:12-21).

5. We define the gathered church as the regular coming together of the members of a local family of faith for the purpose of worship, instruction in God's Word, partaking of the ordinances, and giving of offerings under the oversight of the pastors/elders, which will most typically occur on Sundays.

6. Paul's words in verse 15 do not say that women are not able to earn a living alongside men or add to a family income. However as Thomas and Hayne comment well, "*No wife (and no husband) should permit career opportunities to precede domestic commitments.*"¹⁷

7. Egalitarian scholars contend that 1 Timothy 2:11-12 should not be read as universal prohibitions towards women, but rather as addressing unique and particular circumstances in Ephesus during the time of the letter's writing. Particularly the argument is that because particular women had found newfound freedom both from changes in Roman culture and the establishment of the church, that freedom was being abused by loud and disruptive behavior by particular female false teachers at Ephesus. While indeed there may have been specific cultural circumstances that caused Paul to write these instructions to Timothy, no mention is made of them in the letter. Secondly, because Paul bases the reason for the prohibitions in the Genesis order of creation it is unlikely that the male and female roles presented are to be taken as local advice only. "Paul goes back to creation, showing us that God made men to be head of

¹⁶ For detailed explanation of why we have differentiated the distinct, but related actions 'teaching' and 'exercising authority' see Andreas J. Köstenberger, "A Complex Sentence: The Syntax of 1 Timothy 2:12." In *Women in the church: An Interpretation and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9-15*, edited by Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, 117-161. Third Edition. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016.

¹⁷ Ibid, 103.

the family.”¹⁸ In 1 Timothy 3, the next chapter, Paul instructs Timothy that qualified male elders were to be entrusted with the responsibility of instructing God’s people from God’s word (1 Tim. 3:1-7).

1 Timothy 3:1-7

3 The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. 2 Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4 He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, 5 for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church? 6 He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. 7 Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil. (ESV)

In 1 Timothy 2, Paul lays the foundation for men and women in the context of corporate worship, particularly not permitting women to "teach or exercise authority over a man". Those two particular functions are normal requirements of those who serve in the official capacity as an elder. It is therefore fitting that Paul transitions from 1 Timothy 2 into a description of those who are qualified for the role of elder in 1 Timothy 3.

Paul's instructions for Timothy raise the bar incredibly high for those who are to be entrusted with the office of elder. Of note is the requirement that the candidate be a "*husband of one wife*." In first-century Roman culture honorable women were expected to be faithful to one husband, but no such requirement was upon honorable men, in fact men were often celebrated for their promiscuous lifestyles. In this simple phrase, Paul both critiques the normative practices of men and establishes marital faithfulness as a requirement for any man who is to serve as an elder. Further, by requiring that those who serve as an elder within a church be faithful husbands, he is limiting the role to qualified men.¹⁹

A common question that follows is in regards to the qualifications for deacons that immediately follow in verses 8-13.²⁰ There Paul also uses the exact same Greek construction when he states

¹⁸ Simon J. Robinson, *Opening up 1 Timothy* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2004), 49.

¹⁹ Larry W. Hurtado *Destroyer of the Gods: Early Christian Distinctiveness in the Roman World* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2017), 166.

²⁰ Deacons serve a vital role within the life of a healthy Church. The word Deacon literally means servant. As seen in Acts 6:3 Deacons were raised up in the early Church in order to serve very practical and logistical needs. Deacons

that deacons are to, "be the husband of one wife." If women are not permitted by Paul to serve in the office of elder, why then are women oftentimes permitted and encouraged to serve in the role of deacon in complementarian churches? There are three reasons for this. First, in 1 Timothy 3:11 Paul says, "Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things." On an initial reading this seems to be commenting on the wives of deacons, however the translation from the Greek is not clear. It may also be read, "Women likewise must be dignified..." In other words, based on the reading of the Greek Paul may very well be directly providing qualifications for female deacons in verse 11. Second, within the qualifications for deacon we see that while there is some overlap with the office of elder, a missing qualification for deacons is the "ability to teach." Based on Paul's instructions earlier in 1 Timothy 3:12 we believe the door is open for women to faithfully serve within the office of deacon. Finally, in Romans 16:1 we read of Phoebe being a "deaconess of the church at Cenchrea." While there is debate about Paul's meaning, whether he intended to use the term "deaconess" as an official title within the church or rather the simple idea of "servant," we believe that this was an actual title and that Scripture does not disqualify women from serving in the office of deacon, and therefore joyfully maintain women within this role.

Junia the Apostle: Romans 16:7

One of the more common arguments in defense of the egalitarian position is found in Romans 16:7. In this chapter, Paul closes out his letter to the Roman church by listing many people he is grateful for in ministry, ten of whom are women. Compared to other literature from the same time period, this is a powerful testimony of the position and influence women held in the early church.

One person in particular is Junia, who has become a source of controversy. Egalitarians often interpret the description of Junia to mean that Junia was an apostle, and that as an apostle must have functioned like the other apostles, teaching and exercising authority as an elder. Below we have shared two separate English translations of this verse in order to show the interpretive challenge that must be considered.

(ESV) "Greet Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me."

(NASB95) "Greet Andronicus and Junias, my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners, who are outstanding among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me."

are therefore qualified individuals within a local Church who officially serve the needs of the body whatever they may be.

While the ESV translates the original Greek to describe Junia as "*well known to the apostles*," the NASB95 describes Junia as "*outstanding among the apostles*". There are a number of important questions/challenges that must be addressed when comparing these two translations. First, we must look at the grammar and syntax and see which translation is most accurate. Secondly, we must ask whether Junia was a male or female. Third, if the NASB95 translation is correct, does this imply that *she* held the title of "apostle" in the early church? Fourth, if so, does this title assume that the title "apostle" as used in Romans 16:7 demand that Junia was an elder of a church who exercised her authority through teaching?

First, let's briefly examine the grammar and syntax. The Greek reads ἐπιστήμοι ἐν τοῖς ἀποστόλοις. This phrase seems to emphasize a known closed group of people, "the apostles."²¹ Further, considering the grammatical structure. The plural noun "the apostles" is in the Greek dative case. The NET Bible comments, "*Although ἐν plus a personal dative does not indicate agency, in collocation with words of perception, (ἐν plus) dative personal nouns are often used to show the recipients. In this instance, the idea would then be 'well known to the apostles.'*"²² While "*well known among the apostles*" is possible, we feel the best meaning of the phrase is that both Andronicus and Junia were well known by a particular group of people referred to as "*the apostles*."

Secondly, we want to ask whether Junias was a woman or a man. Much modern literature assumes that Junias was a female, however this is not demanded by the text and in fact a strong case that Junias was actually a male can be made. Early church fathers seem to be split on the matter. Origen believed Junias to be male, while Chrysostom believed Junias to be female. Piper & Grudem comment that Epiphanius believed Junias to be male adding, "*Perhaps somewhat more weight may be given to the statement by Epiphanius, since he appears to know more specific information about Junias (that he became bishop of Apameia).*"²³ Further, BAGD explains that Junias is likely a shortened form of the male name "Junanian."²⁴ While this is not conclusive, and certainly there is room to consider that Junia may have been a woman, there are enough questions about Junia's gender to be cautious about over-utilizing this verse in order to form doctrinal positions.

²¹ Charles Hodge, A Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans, New Edition. (Grand Rapids, MI: Louis Kregel, 1882), 706.

²² Biblical Studies Press, The NET Bible First Edition; Bible. English. NET Bible.; The NET Bible (Biblical Studies Press, 2005).

²³ Piper, John, and Wayne Grudem. Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism. 2012. Page 80.

²⁴ Robert H. Mounce, Romans, vol. 27, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1995).

Grammatically, if we do assume the alternate translation, “*well known among the apostles*”, we do not necessarily have to assume that this means that Junias was an apostle herself. The phrase could simply mean that Junias’ excellence was known by the group of people known as “the apostles”. Finally, the term “apostle” can and often does refer to a closed group of individuals in the early New Testament church, but it also can have a broader understanding. The term often simply means “messenger,” as in Philippians 2:25, “*I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need...*” The NASB95 translation that assumes Junia as one among the ἁπὸ σφόδρα does not necessarily mean that this person had the official title of an apostle. It could simply refer to her status as a celebrated messenger.

In conclusion, we believe the ESV translation most clearly conveys the meaning of the grammar and syntax of the original Greek. We are not decided as to whether Junias was a male or female, and even if we were certain on that issue, it seems clear that Paul was not assigning Junias the title of *apostle* in an official sense in Romans 16:7.

Ephesians 5:22-33

22 “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. 25 Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, 26 that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, 27 so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. 28 In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, 30 because we are members of his body. 31 “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” 32 This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. 33 However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.” (ESV)

In this passage, the Apostle Paul continues his teaching on what it looks like to be filled with the Spirit (5:18), not only in the moments we gather together for worship, but also in our most foundational relationships with one another in the home. And here, it’s concerning God’s wonderful and mysterious design for a husband (man) and wife (woman) to be united together

in the covenant of marriage, which they will be working on for the entirety of their union together.

A wife puts the glory of God on display as she submits (v. 22) to her husband's loving and self-sacrificing leadership. As a wife takes hold of the God-given exhortation to respect her husband (v. 33) by coming alongside, supporting, encouraging, heeding and giving counsel towards the direction of God's will in their relationship, she will fulfill her unique role in helping him to become the man God has called him to be at home, in the church, and in the world. It's essential to understand that submitting *does not* mean that a wife 'lays down' for a husband's non-Spirit led attitudes and pursuits. If the husband is acting contrary to his call of loving and self-sacrificing leadership (i.e. spiritual, physical, and verbal abuse), the wife is to respectfully *not* follow, but lovingly confront (with the help of others if necessary), in hopes that the husband will return to his role of submitting to Christ and putting his wife's needs ahead of his own.

For the husband, spiritual fruitfulness and delight is found as he gladly gives his life away for the sake of his wife (v. 25). As a husband assumes his unique God-given role to serve, care for, and love his wife, he will help her bring forth spiritual fruit at home, in the church, and in the world. Further, it will communicate to his wife that he cherishes her (v. 29), and that he can't be the husband God has called him to be without her becoming all she's called to be- pure and holy in his sight (v. 26). There is no place whatsoever for abusive and domineering leadership by a husband. He does not suppress his wife by "demanding her place", but rather supports and invests in her giftedness for kingdom impact in all areas of life.

The submissive and self-sacrificing roles of a wife and husband in marriage are akin to Christ who (although equal with the Father) submits to the Father's loving leadership in all things, and in self-sacrificing love gives his life away for his bride- the Church. In other words, the husband and wife have the astounding privilege to put on display the glory of the gospel in their relationship for all to see- a profound mystery indeed (v. 32), yet solved in God's wonderful idea and picture of his self-giving and never-breaking covenant love.

Further Notes/Counterpoints

1. For those holding a "mutual submission" application around the relationship between husband and wife, it should be noted that their determination has been concluded on the placement of v. 21 ("submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ"), within Paul's exhortation of the Spirit-filled life. The mutual submission theory holds that the placement of v. 21 is the "header" for what follows and concludes both the woman *and* man submit to one another. In one sense they do, in that *everyone* is to submit to one another in considering

others needs ahead of their own. That's the life of Christian community! Yet textually, v. 21 is joined to the preceding four participles in vs. 19-20 and operates as a "hinge verse" moving Paul to his next set of exhortations regarding relationships specifically within marriage, families, and the workplace.

2. One important observation to note here is that nowhere does Paul tell the husband to *submit* to his wife. Submit is the Greek word *hypotasso*, which means "the ordering of something underneath something else," from which we conclude that the husband is the head of his wife and not vice-versa. If that were so, there would be an exchange of roles, and we've already established they are unique to one another.

3. Interpreting this passage as "mutual submission" also carries a major theological problem in that the husband and wife relationship is compared to Christ's relationship with the church. If mutual submission is the goal of the husband/wife relationship, then we would have to ask ourselves, "Does Christ submit Himself to the church?" To which we would say, "Of course not." Christ is the head of the church and we are the members. Further, if we carry this interpretation into 6:1-9 (the extended teaching regarding social codes), we would then have to ask ourselves, "Are parents, then, supposed to submit to their children, or bosses to their employees?" To which we would say, "No. The effects would contribute to the unraveling of society".

1 Corinthians 11:2–16

² Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold fast to the traditions just as I delivered them to you. ³ But I want you to know that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of the woman, and God is the head of Christ. ⁴ Every man who prays or prophesies with something on his head dishonors his head. ⁵ Every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since that is one and the same as having her head shaved. ⁶ For if a woman doesn't cover her head, she should have her hair cut off. But if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her head be covered. ⁷ A man should not cover his head, because he is the image and glory of God. So too, woman is the glory of man. ⁸ For man did not come from woman, but woman came from man. ⁹ Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man. ¹⁰ This is why a woman should have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. ¹¹ In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, and man is not independent of woman. ¹² For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman, and all things come from God. ¹³ Judge for yourselves: Is it proper

for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? ¹⁴Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair it is a disgrace to him, ¹⁵ but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her as a covering. ¹⁶ If anyone wants to argue about this, we have no other custom, nor do the churches of God. (CSB)

First Corinthians 11:2-16 is, by far, one of the most challenging sections of Paul's writings to understand. The passage is filled not only with complicated grammatical nuance, but also with sophisticated cultural assumptions and arguments. Words such as "head" (v. 3) and "covering" (v. 15) range in meanings and cultural implications both in Paul's first-century context and ours today. Complicating matters, it is initially unclear who specifically Paul is talking about in verse 3 as both words for 'man' and 'woman' can be translated in the more specific terms of 'husband' and 'wife'.²⁵ Unsurprisingly, this passage is sharply debated.

At first glance, it seems straightforward: Paul teaches that women ought to wear a head covering in the church service while praying and prophesying. Nevertheless, when many of us in the Western world look around the churches we've attended, we are hard-pressed to find everyone of them that enforces strict adherence to what Paul writes here! The conclusion most of us can come to, then, is that we are either conveniently ignoring this biblical teaching or that it is somehow no longer applicable.

However, a careful reading of this passage within its proper biblical and historical context will lead us to see a simple underlying principle, articulated in v. 3, which Paul specifically applies in the first-century Corinthian context. While Paul's application revolves around *head* coverings, or 'veils,' we will see that applying this principle is still a biblical mandate for the Church. However, it may look different in our modern Western context.

The timeless principle of 1 Corinthians 11:3-16 is simple: Christians must seek to honor their 'head' in corporate worship in ways that reflect the God-created distinctions between men and women. That said, we must now turn to the difficult task of understanding what this meant for the Corinthians (and other first-century churches) and what it means for us. To do that, we'll look at two crucial elements that bring clarity to this passage: the practice of wearing veils in the first century Greco-Roman culture,²⁶ and the meaning of 'head' (v. 3).

²⁵ Note that the CSB, quoted above, translates these words as 'man' and 'woman' in line with the vast majority of other English translations.. For additional reasons concerning the preference for 'man' and 'women' over 'husband and wife', which is seen in the ESV, see 'Notes' section below.

²⁶ It is widely documented that Corinth was a Roman city, widely adopting and adhering to common Roman customs and laws. Therefore, we talk of Corinth as being part of the 'Greco-Roman' world. Cf. Paul and Gender

Veils or ‘Coverings’ in the First Century

First, A quick reading of the passage in its entirety reveals the issue at hand revolves around women wearing head coverings when praying or prophesying during corporate gatherings of the church.²⁷ Paul is adamant that women must have their heads covered while participating in these actions (v. 5-6). Yet, to fully understand why he is mandating this practice, we must understand what head coverings, or veils, signified in Corinth’s first-century context.

Throughout the ancient world, before and during Paul’s time, head-coverings symbolized “modesty, honor, status, and protection for a woman...”²⁸. Furthermore, they were a symbol utilized to re-enforce class distinctions between those of noble, or honorable positions, and those of inferior status. Therefore, women who were slaves, former slaves, or prostitutes were explicitly forbidden from wearing a veil.²⁹ A woman who did not have a veil in Roman culture was placed in significant threat because her uncovered head was a recognized affirmation of her ‘availability’ to men. Roman law even stated that if a woman did not dress like a respectable Roman ‘matron’ and a man harassed her, he would not be legally liable for his actions.³⁰ Headcoverings sent a clear message about the status, or lack thereof, of women.

It is not surprising, then, that a question about head coverings would come up in the Corinthian church as Paul clearly states their church had people of different social classes (1. Cor. 1:26). How were the women of lower-class society to be treated within the church? Could they take on the veil and, therefore, a position of honor? Or must they remain unveiled as the customs would have demanded?

Most people reading 1 Corinthians 11:2-16 assume Paul is correcting women’s unwillingness to wear a head covering. However, a proper understanding of the significance of coverings in the first-century world indicates the *opposite*. He desires that no women in the church be looked at as inferior and therefore barred from the symbol of honor in wearing a covering! In Christ, all women in the church have value, dignity and are worthy of respect; the Greco-Roman customs cannot overpower gospel implications! Paul is wonderfully undermining a cultural practice that perpetuated women’s subjugation and showed that all women are treasured and valuable in the gospel, not just a select few.

The Meaning of ‘Head’

²⁷ ‘Corporate gatherings of the church’ corresponds to what we typically call a “church service.

²⁸ Westfall, Cynthia Long. *Paul and Gender: Reclaiming the Apostle’s Vision for Men and Women in Christ*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2016), 30.

²⁹ Paul and Gender, 25.

³⁰ Ibid, 29.

Second, how does the understanding of wearing a veil relate to the principle in 1 Cor. 11:3; Christians must honor their 'head' in corporate worship in ways that reflect the God-created distinctions between men and women?

To do this, we need to know what Paul means by 'head,' a point that has compelling scholarship on all sides. We cannot, here, discuss all the options and evidence for which meaning is best. Briefly, it's helpful to know that the major options include: "Authority or Leader,"³¹ "Source,"³² or "Preeminence".³³

What is abundantly clear is that, whatever Paul means by 'head,' it is a metaphor. Therefore, talking about the meaning of the word 'head' is not merely a question of how the word should be translated, but how Paul uses this metaphor! What are his intended implications with this imagery?

Again, it is helpful to look towards the first-century world of his original audience. In doing so, what we find is that Paul is not the only author to use this metaphor. The Greco-Roman world is filled with people using the analogy of the 'head' and 'body' to describe relationships. In Paul's day, there was a predictable way for people to describe the Roman Emperor's relationship to the rest of Roman society. The Emperor was the 'head,' and the people were the 'body'! In Roman culture, the 'body' did whatever it could to serve and protect the 'head.' The Roman philosopher and writer Seneca talked of Emperor Nero as the 'head' this way, "The body's loyalty to the head as it's sovereign is so great that it will even thrust it's right hand into the flame or plunge willingly into a chasm if necessary..."³⁴

And yet, as we have already seen in Ephesians 5:22-33, Paul's understanding of 'head' is drastically different. Whereas, culturally, the 'head' would be seen as the 'leader,' 'sovereign' or even 'authority,' Paul demonstrates that, in the gospel, the 'head' is profoundly self-sacrificing! The 'head' serves; the 'head' sacrifices. Far from the body laying down *its* life for the 'head,' the 'head' **"loves...and gives itself up..."** for the body (Ephesians 5:25).

Seeing how Greco-Roman society viewed 'headship' and how Paul elsewhere directly challenges that concept with the gospel, we are now ready to move towards an answer to our

³¹ Grudem, Wayne. "The Meaning of Kephalē ('Head'): A Response to Recent Studies." In *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism*, edited by John Piper and Wayne Grudem, 425–468. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2006.

³² Fitzmyer, Joseph A. "Another Look at κεφαλή in 1 Corinthians 11.3." *New Testament Studies* 35, no. 4 (1989): 503-11.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Lee-Barnewall, Michelle. *Neither Complementarian nor Egalitarian: A Kingdom Corrective to the Evangelical Gender Debate*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic 2016), 152

question above. What does Paul mean to imply by saying “...**the man is the head of woman...**” in 1 Cor. 11:3?

Simply this: in the church, women of any social background, regardless of the perceived cultural status forced on them by Greco-Roman society, find protection, honor, and care in their self-sacrificing ‘head.’

This passage is traditionally interpreted as talking primarily about authority and submission. Yet, the full historical context reveals an even broader understanding of how the gospel affirms and protects all women’s dignity, value, and worth.

Now we turn back to the full passage and see how understanding the first-century concepts of head-covering and ‘headship’ help move us to a clearer interpretation of such a challenging passage.

Again, the issue at hand is clearly stated in 1 Cor. 11:4-5, **“Every man who prays or prophesies with something on his head dishonors his head. Every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since that is one and the same as having her head shaved.”** This is a matter of proper dress between men and women in the corporate gathering. For men, a covered head is dishonoring. For women, an uncovered head is dishonoring. Paul recognizes the message of ‘availability’ that would be conveyed by women with uncovered heads. As he suggests, a woman could simply **“shave her head,”** but this too would be **“disgraceful”** (v. 6), and her hair is her **“glory”** (v. 15). Therefore, Paul’s point is that the best way forward is for all women in the church to use a veil. This shows honor to all women as they, in turn, honor their ‘head.’

In verse 7, Paul says, **“A man should not cover his head, because he is the image and glory of God. So too, woman is the glory of man.”** And yet, it is not possible to conclude that women are not created in the image of God. Genesis 1:27 makes it emphatically clear that both men and women are equal image-bearers. Furthermore, dispelling notions of inequality, Paul demonstrates the interdependence of men and women, **“Neither was man created for the sake of woman, but woman for the sake of man...In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, and man is not independent of woman. For just as woman came from man, so man comes through woman, and all things come from God.”** (1 Cor. 11:11-12)

While it is nuanced, Paul is making the vital point that honoring their ‘heads’ in the corporate gathering will look different between men and women. Men do *not* wear coverings, while women do. This is not because they are of different worth or value, but because of the creation order. Christians today ought to celebrate differences between men and women as divinely

inspired and, therefore, good! But Paul also clarifies that these differences cannot be interpreted as reasons for reinforcing inferiority between men and women.

As mentioned earlier, many of us would be hard-pressed to find examples of churches in western culture directly applying this teaching regarding head coverings today. This, we believe, is because uncovered heads in western culture do not communicate the same kind of dishonor they did in the first century. That said, we should not conclude that this passage has nothing to offer us today.

In the end, 1 Corinthians 11 has much more to say about the posture Christian men and women take before our God, especially in corporate worship. This passage strikes against the modern narrative which seeks to blur the lines of distinction between men and women which includes how the believer dresses and engages with the opposite sex. How we express ourselves matters, perhaps a great deal more than we might recognize today. That God would have standards or expectations for how His people relate to Him is a familiar theme within the biblical storyline. One need only think of Nadab and Abihu's shorter story offering strange fire in Numbers 3:1-4 or even Ananias and Sapphira's costly lie in Acts 5:1-11 to recognize that our posture is crucial. There is a standard set for God's people because of His holiness for the way that they approach Him. While, in Christ, we have access to the **"throne room of grace"** (Heb. 4:16), that does not mean we approach a Holy God devoid of reverence and honor. Paul's principle in 1 Corinthians 11 stands: Christians must seek to honor their 'head' in corporate worship in ways that reflect the God-created distinctions between men and women.

Additionally, we must take seriously the statement in 1 Corinthians 11:3 that **"...the man is the head of the woman..."** As mentioned earlier, men, being the 'head,' are to protect, honor, and care for the women in the church. By virtue of creation and God's design, men are 'heads' demonstrated by the posture of self-sacrifice toward women in the church. Christian communities ought to be places of safety and honor for women. When there are issues of harm or abuse, God-ordained headship demands that the rest of the men in the church step in for care and protection. To do otherwise would fail to act as 'head.'

1 Corinthians 11:2-16 is a beautiful passage that displays the work of the gospel in the Christian community. Far from being out-dated or ignored, we should see how it offers a powerful gospel-centered critique of subjugation and compels believers today in all churches to show honor to one another as we seek to faithfully honor our 'head.'

Notes

1. One major challenge in interpreting this passage revolves around the question, “Does the word for ‘woman’ also mean wife, or can the word for ‘man’ mean husband? All of this is dependent on context. It seems that Paul is talking about men and women in general. He would not be talking about only married men as those whose head is Christ. In addition, it follows that if he is talking about *all believing men* then he would also be talking about *all believing women*. Additionally, the vast majority of scholarship on this passage supports the translation as ‘man’ and ‘woman’ as do most current English translations.

2. “Because of the angels” (1 Cor. 11:10) is a difficult part of the passage to understand, as it is unclear if Paul is talking about ‘heavenly beings’ or simply ‘messengers’ that would be reporting back to him what is going on in the churches. The Greek term can be translated both ways. Both are valid interpretations, though the first option is more in line with how Paul speaks of a Christian’s relationship to the heavenly beings in 1 Cor. 6:3.

3. Veils in the first-century context carry a fuller connotation than merely slaves, former slaves and prostitutes. They would also indicate, in some circles, that a woman was simply unmarried. However, the general sense of being ‘unveiled’ in Greco-Roman society would still include a notion of ‘sexual availability’ and therefore open to potential threat of violence.³⁵

1 Corinthians 14:33-40

33 For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, 34 the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. 35 If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. 36 Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached? 37 If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. 38 If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. 39 So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. 40 But all things should be done decently and in order. (ESV)

First Corinthians 14:33b-36 helps bring to conclusion a larger section stemming from the beginning of chapter 12 and Paul’s directives on the proper use of spiritual gifts within the

³⁵ Cf. Keener, Craig S. *Paul, Women & Wives: Marriage and Women’s Ministry in the Letters of Paul*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992. 22-46; *Paul and Gender*, 24-40.

gathered assembly, as he maintains a desire for order throughout. This is a prominent passage in the conversation concerning the roles of men and women in the church because of how it directly states that women should remain silent in the churches. Taken at face value, it would be challenging to apply today, as it would not only exclude women from preaching, but also from speaking in any form in the gathering of believers (ex. singing, praying, prophesying, speaking, etc.).

And yet, even a cursory reading of Paul's letter to the Corinthians demonstrates that a surface level interpretation of the text is not sufficient to understand his point here. He has already stated clearly that women can pray and prophesy in I Corinthians 11:5 during the corporate gatherings.

If we assume that Paul does not directly contradict himself or the other New Testament writers who mention women speaking (Acts 2:17, 21:9), then there are important questions for the interpreter today. What is the domain within which Paul's command should be located? What kind of silence does he mean? What are the boundaries of this kind of silence, if any? And how does this passage fit into the larger teaching of the New Testament and Paul's letters in particular? In determining the answer to these questions, as always, it is important to consider the context where his instructions reside.

Beginning in chapter 11, Paul turns his attention to speak to what happens in the gathering of the church. He has concerns with the way things have been working, and he's correcting their understanding of what should be happening. In chapters 12-14:33a, Paul is addressing the exercising of spiritual gifts with a focus on tongues and prophecy³⁶ and their appropriate place within the corporate gathering of the church. His issue is that too many people are coming to the congregation with 'words' of prophecy and no evaluation of that prophecy, and as a result, creating chaos. Paul's point in the first half of 1 Corinthians 14:33 is that in all the churches of the saints, God is not a God of confusion, but of peace.

It seems that the best interpretation of 'silence' is that Paul prohibits women from evaluating prophecy within the gathering. This evaluation is what Paul encouraged in 1 Corinthians 14:29 as the antidote to the chaos introduced by uninterpreted tongues and unevaluated prophecy. This makes the most sense of how Paul can talk about women prophesying and praying in 1 Corinthians 11 and at the same time hold together his command in 1 Timothy 2:12 that women should not teach with authority. It is necessary to keep in mind that the role of prophecy in the gathering is very broad. We need not think that all prophecy is to be received with the same level of authority as that which is recorded for us in the Old Testament (i.e. Isaiah, Jeremiah,

³⁶ See 'Further Notes' section for detailed explanation.

Ezekiel, etc.). Rather, in general, prophecy is a Spirit-led encouragement for the congregation or an individual that is to be evaluated and affirmed as authoritative by those put in place by God to do so. When this interpretation of Paul's command is held in conjunction with the rest of the teaching of the New Testament, we would see the primary responsibility of evaluating prophecy as belonging to the elders of the church.³⁷

Further Notes/Counterpoints

1. In general, the counterpoint to this passage revolves around two suggestions: One, it's not original to Paul and he contradicts himself. Or two, it's simply a saying attributed to Paul, but placed in the wrong section of this letter by a later scribe.
2. A common notion contributing to the work of interpreting this passage suggests that women were likely "disrupting the service with questions," as it was common practice at the time for listeners to regularly interrupt lectures, in order to learn more or compete intellectually with the lecturer.³⁸
3. This passage clearly affirms women's roles of praying and prophesying within the church, while at the same time providing important guidelines for gender expectations and relations.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Bible unequivocally affirms both male and female were uniquely created in the image of God, as the capstone of his creation. Although they are equal in value and dignity, with no distinctions in terms of innate potential or ability, they are also wonderfully complimentary in their roles and functions at home and in the church. Together, they put on display the glory of God in his creation order, as they live out their response to his loving kingship and design.

May Park Community Church and all of God's people strive together to engage in gracious and humble dialogue and showcase the transforming work of the gospel in our relationships with one another, as we seek to order all aspects of our lives according to his good, pleasing, and perfect will, which is found in his timeless and Holy Word.

³⁷ Cf. 1 Timothy 3:2 where the elders are given the task of teaching. This must be seen in conjunction with authoritative teaching that Paul has just talked about in chapter 2. See also Acts 6:4 where the institution of the Deacon ministry is brought about in order to free the Apostles, to focus on prayer and teaching ministry. Regarding the wide range of meaning for 'prophecy' cf. Carson, D.A. *Showing the Spirit: An Exposition of 1 Corinthians 12-14*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Press, 2019. 91-100.

³⁸ Craig Keener, "Leaning in the Assemblies," in *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity without Hierarchy*, ed. Ronald W. Pierce and Rebecca Merrill Groothuis (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2005), 161-71.

Our Affirmations

Based on our study of God's Word, in particular to the roles of men and women in the church, the Church-Wide Elder Team has sought to be as clear as possible in applications, not only to eliminate any confusion or frustration, but to bring a growing clarity around how this applies for Park today.

-We believe that both men and women are made in the image of God- of equal worth, value, dignity, and respect and given gifts by the Spirit to serve in the local church.

-We believe that the office of pastor/elder is reserved for biblically qualified men.

-We believe that the preaching/teaching ministry at our weekly worship gatherings is reserved for biblically qualified pastors/elders.³⁹

-We believe that pastors/elders are primarily responsible to teach classes on doctrines of theology.⁴⁰

-We believe that the administration of the Lord's Supper and Baptism is reserved for pastors/elders.⁴¹

-We believe that biblically qualified men and women can serve as deacons.

-We believe that both men and women can oversee certain ministries.⁴²

-We believe that both men and women can lead music during services at our weekly gatherings.

-We believe that both men and women can host during services at our weekly gatherings.

-We believe that both men and women can serve on Leadership Teams.⁴³

³⁹ There may be exceptions for those non-elder men and residents who are in process/training and/or are guest speakers.

⁴⁰ Examples may include: Park Elders Training, Systematic Theology, Apologetics Training, etc. and other courses within the Park Academy. Exceptions to this general principle may be determined at the discretion of the local elders.

Further, we believe that while the principle of qualified men teaching classes is normative, there are particular classes & retreats throughout the life of the Church where co-ed teaching is ideal. Examples may include the Marriage Retreat, Marriage Prep, or the Leadership Catalyst.

⁴¹ There can be non-pastors/elders and women present to help serve.

⁴² Examples may include: global team, outreach teams, HR, communications, finance, tech, set up, building maintenance, children's ministry, connections, Women's Ministry etc.

⁴³ A Leadership Team is a team that may be formed Park-wide or at the local level to give input and support to the various ministries of the church.

-We believe that men should lead men's small groups and women should lead women's small groups, and a man and woman should lead a co-ed group together.⁴⁴

-We believe that women can lead/teach a study, class, training seminar, or retreat for women.

-We believe that pastors/elders preside over marriages, child dedications, and funerals of Park members.

⁴⁴While we understand small group models look different between individual Park churches, in general, we suggest as a best practice for co-ed small groups to have both a male and female leaders.

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