

Biblical Foundations for Women in Ministry and Leadership
Outline of Breakout Session
Women at the Well Retreat
BIC Council for Women in Ministry & Leadership
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Purpose

- To provide biblically-based resources that will enable a better understanding of the role of women in ministry and leadership
- Not a comprehensive biblical argument for women to serve, but a place to begin to question why women are discouraged from serving in areas where they feel God's call in their lives
- To gain confidence through a new understanding of Scripture that has been used to discourage women from serving in ministry roles.
- You will hear the voices of Luke Keefer, Jr., Grace Holland, John Bristow, Gordon Fee, Gilbert Bilezikian, Craig Keener, and Pat Oldham, as well as my own throughout this session.

Two Understandings

- **Complementarian**
Those who embrace complementarism begin their journey by looking to the creation story in Genesis. Since man was created from the dust of the earth, and woman was created from the rib of a man, the woman must be inferior to the man. Since the woman was deceived by the serpent, she then is the most vulnerable of the species. Further, those who were used to lead Israel in the Old Testament were men, therefore, women were less worthy. Moving into the New Testament, a complementarian would point to the fact that Jesus had only male disciples and the only known apostles of the New Testament were men. They would also point to Paul's letters, using scripture that spoke to women being silent, and the glory of man rather than of God. They also relegate Galatians 3:28—neither male nor female—to an understanding of salvation only and not impacting ecclesiology.
- **Egalitarian**
Those who embrace egalitarianism would point to God's original intent in creating man and woman who shared equally in the garden and walked in equal relationship with him. They would also point to the fact that even within a very patriarchal society, there were women in the Old Testament who held high office and provided leadership to the Israelite people. As we move into the New Testament, an egalitarian would point to Jesus' radical behavior toward women in that very patriarchal society. He conversed freely with women, allowed them to be taught at his feet, allowed them to support his ministry and travel with him and his disciples. An egalitarian would point to the fact that Jesus ushered in the new order where all were equal—defined by Paul as Jew and Greek with further definition of slave and free, male and female. Both men and women received the

Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and Paul spoke often of women praying and prophesying. The hard sayings of Paul regarding women are closely scrutinized and serious doubt has been placed on their proper translation from Greek. Most importantly, as we are all given equal access to salvation and baptism, we are also all provided the same Holy Spirit who gifts men and women as he sees fit.

A Women's Role in the Old Testament

- Creation
 - Three arguments used to place women in a subordinate role
 - “Man/Adam” as an indicator of the male race and dominance over women
 - The order of creation
 - The woman is named as his “helper”

“Man/Adam: as an indicator of the male race and dominance over women

Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion...
Genesis 1:26

God determines to make “man” (singular), but refers to “man” as “them” (plural). The designation “man” is a generic term for “human being” and that encompasses both male and female. In Genesis 5:2 we are told, *He created them male and female; at the time they were created, he blessed them and called them “man”* (NIV). Thus when God declared, *Let us make man in our image...* the term man refers to both male and female. Femaleness pertains to the image of God as fully as maleness. God is neither male nor female. He transcends both genders since they are both comprehended within His image. In verse 26 we are told, *Let them have dominion*. They are authorized to act as God’s commissioned agents. The text in Genesis gives no hint of a division of responsibilities or of a distinction of rank in their administration of the natural realm. The lack of any restrictions or of any qualifications in their participation in the task implies roles of equality for man and woman. Nowhere is it stated that man was intended to rule over woman as God’s original creation design. In this shared partnership they are equals.

In the Genesis 1 account of God’s creation design, neither maleness or femaleness connotes a disparity in rank or function. Both man and woman bear the image of God, so that their sexuality is the reflection of different aspects of the Creator’s personality. As a result, they both share equally in the God-assigned task of creation rulership without any intimation of role distinctions.

The order of creation

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. Genesis 1:27 (RSV)

If we are to argue that man is superior to woman based on creation order, we would then have to argue that the animals are superior to man since they were first in the order of creation.

The woman is named “helper”

It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.
Genesis 2:18 (NIV)

The full expression of humanity necessitated the creation of woman, not as a sublime afterthought or as an optional adjunct to independent and self-sufficient male existence, but as the indispensable counterpart to man in God’s perfect creation.

The word “helper” has created a stumbling block for many in an understanding of the partnership of man and woman. When studied, “helper” as used in the Old Testament will dispel many misconceptions. The Hebrew word is not used in the Bible with reference to a subordinate person such as a servant or an underling. It is generally attributed to God when he is engaged in activities of relief or rescue among his people. God provided man with an equal partner.

Conclusion from Creation

The creation story shows God’s ideal of man and woman enjoying a relationship of mutuality in equality. There is nothing in Genesis 1 and 2 that provides even a hint of disparity in nature or rank between man and woman.

- **Sin enters the world**

I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing, in pain you will bring forth children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”

Genesis 3:16

- When sin enters the world, the male and female compete for status. The man is victorious and the culture of the time is focused on a patriarchal society. Before the Fall only God had authority over Adam and Eve. Now God is seen to have authority over Adam and Adam to have authority over Eve. This was not God’s original intent. In the “curse,” God acknowledges their inevitable reality as the product of the fall, without ever sanctioning them as His design. The “he shall rule over you” should not be viewed as prescribing God’s will any more than death may be regarded as God’s will for humans. The ruler/subject relationship between Adam and Eve began after the Fall.
- Even within this society where man is dominant over woman, there were women of the Old Testament that were used by God to carry forward his ministry among his people.
- Examples of these women are:
 - Female authority in religious life

- The people spoke to God through the priest, but God spoke to the people through the prophet. The mantle of divine authority was worn by the prophet more than by the priest. Interestingly, while the old-covenant legislation made no provision for the appointment of female priests, several female prophets ministered during that period. Although statistically the majority of the old-covenant prophets were male, the Bible refers to several prophetesses and describes them as exercising the same kind of authority in the religious sphere as their male counterparts (Deborah, Huldah, and so on).
 - Deborah was a prophetess who was also one of the Judges of Israel. Deborah, aided by Barak, rallied the Israelites to fight against Sisera and the Canaanites. Barak a military general would not go to war without Deborah. (Judges 4-5)
 - Huldah was a renowned prophetess and the wife of Shallum (keeper of the wardrobe) in the time of King Josiah's reign. The high priest Hilkiah brought to the king a scroll found during the repair work to the Temple. The scroll contained the book of Deuteronomy. The king told the priests to inquire of God about the book. The priests took the scroll to Huldah who sent it back to the king telling him of the dire judgment against the nation that was fast approaching but would be postponed because of King Josiah's humble heart and desire to reform. (II Kings 22:12)
- Female authority in civil life
 - The Old Testament recounts the stories of several women who have altered the course of history (Rahab, Esther, Ruth, and so on).
 - Rahab was a harlot in Jericho whose military information was much appreciated and whose protection and help in their escape saved the lives of Joshua's spies. (Joshua 2)
 - Esther an orphaned Jewish girl who was raised by her uncle and chosen by King Ahasuerus (uh haz yoo ehr uhs) to be his Queen in replacement for the fickle Queen Vashti. When the king's Prime Minister, Haman, conspired to kill all the Jews, Esther risked her life to find a way to save them. (Book of Esther)
 - Ruth a Moabite girl, the daughter-in-law of Naomi chooses to follow her mother-in-law to her homeland. She also chooses to follow Naomi's

God. Ruth takes care of Naomi and earns a living by gathering grain in the fields of Boaz. She gains the notice and approval of Boaz and eventually they are married. David and Jesus are among the descendants of this honorable woman. (Ruth)

- Other women of prominence in the Old Testament
 - Such stories demonstrate that women were not always “subordinate figures” Examples are:
 - Miriam, the sister of Moses, played a prominent role in both saving the life of her brother as an infant and later in the time of the Exodus. She was the author of one of the earliest and most famous Hebrew literary pieces when she sang a song of praise after the defeat of the Egyptians at the Red Sea. (Exodus 15)
 - Another outstanding woman is Abigail the wife of Nabal, who appeased David when her husband offended him, thus saving the lives of their workers as well as that of her husband. In doing so she also prevented David from sinning against the innocent workers and God as well. (I Samuel 25)
 - The wife in Proverbs 31: 10-31, is certainly no slouch. Her husband trusts her. She is a businesswoman and a good manager of people and resources. She is a good money handler and invests in real estate and other productive ventures. She is strong, capable and able to accomplish difficult tasks. She is successful in business and works late managing an independent career for herself and handles domestic issues as well. She is affluent enough to extend help to the poor. She provides for her household and protects it against adversity and she looks good doing it. Now I know that often women cringe when they hear about this woman, but this is a formidable woman who is being credited for all of the things she is not generally perceived able or allowed to do in this particular culture and time.

Within the confines of the Old Testament and the strictures it imposes upon them, we find women who are leaders in the home, in government, in business, and in religious life.

Conclusion

The mixture of negative and positive elements make of the old covenant a time of compromise between the pressures of the creation ideal and of the fall. Signs of

both are present in an uneasy accommodation that marks the passage from the disastrous effects of the fall to the new age of redemption, when God's purposes of creation are restored so that all things are made new.

A New Creation in Christ

The Gospels

Christ has brought about a new creation: the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Cor. 5:17, NIV)

- The fundamental difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant is that the new-covenant family now lives under the reversal effects of the fall.
 - Examples:
 - Galatians 4:4-7 – Where there was the loss of Eden and alienation from God, there is a family of reconciliation where all may call God their Father
 - John 11:25-26 – Where there was terror in the face of the great violator of Eden, death itself, now there is the quiet assurance of eternal life.
 - Acts 2:46 – Where bread was eaten in hardship and sorrow, it now becomes a sign of God's bounty to be shared together.
 - Ephesians 5:28 – Where the curse had predicted "he shall rule over you," the gospel ordains that "husbands should love their wives as their own bodies."
 - The foundation for the treatment and respect of women is now laid in the coming of Christ. It is very important for all aspects of the life of the church to be brought into conformity with the will of Christ, for it is Christ who laid its foundations through His ministry and teaching.
 - The fall had inflicted devastating results on male/female relations. The unity, solidarity, and harmony of Eden had given way to separation, recriminations, and domination. As Jesus established the new community, He designed it to model God's enduring creational purposes. He made sure that the abuses that had remained through the dark side of the old covenant would be eliminated in the new community. Thus the church would become the haven of unity, solidarity, and harmony that Eden had failed to sustain.
 - We will discover that Jesus called both men and women to follow Him in discipleship and that He expended Himself to teach them and involve them in His service without regard for sexual differences.
 - The sisters of Jesus – Matthew 12:46-50
 - Jesus' call to discipleship extended to "sisters" as well as "brothers."
 - Real blessedness – Luke 11:27-28
 - Jesus was saying to the woman that blessedness does not come from bearing a child. She had the opportunity to

become a disciple through obedience to God. As a woman, she was entitled to this blessing.

- Choosing the best – Luke 10:38-42
 - Although Martha was doing the work of hospitality usually assigned to the woman, Jesus was radical in his telling Martha that Mary had chosen the “best” by setting at his feet to learn. Women had the right to follow and obey Jesus.
- Women disciples – Luke 8:3
 - If a disciple is to be defined as a follower, a student, and a servant, the women who traveled with Jesus and the twelve during His itinerant ministry certainly qualified for that designation.
 - Women who followed Jesus included:
 - Mary Magdalene had been bound sevenfold when she was liberated by Jesus. She followed Him to the cross (Matt. 27:56) and to the tomb (v. 61). She saw the tomb empty (Luke 24:10) and was the first to see the risen Christ (John 20:18). *Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James the young, and of Joses (joh seez), and Salome, who, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and served him; and also many other women who came up with him to Jerusalem* (Mark 15:40-41).
 - Joanna was a married woman, the wife of an officer in the household of Herod the king. She and her husband, Chuza, had probably decided that if Simon Peter could leave his spouse and household to obey Jesus’ call to discipleship, so could she.
 - Susanna must have been known to Luke’s readers as a prominent Christian in the early church, since no information is provided about her except for the fact that she was one of the women who supported Jesus’ ministry financially. Apparently, some of the women disciples were persons of sufficient means to enable Jesus and his group not to be concerned about their expenses.
- Jesus provided opportunities for women to play primary roles in the main events of His redemptive ministry, such as His birth, miracles, outreach missions, death, and resurrection.
 - The first news of incarnation was given to a woman as the angel spoke to Mary (Luke 1:32-35)
 - The first Samaritan convert was a woman (John 4:7-42)
- Jesus set the example for his church. He taught both women and men (Matt. 14:21, 15:38). Women were among his followers, making the long journeys on foot with the male disciples (Matt.

27:55; Luke 23:49, 55). The apostles began to speak of the *women of our company* (Luke 24:22).

Conclusion

In this new community, men and women are called by God to occupy kingdom functions and to assume kingdom roles at maximum levels of investment and visibility tolerable within their contemporary cultures. In multiple ways, Jesus established the principle of full access of both men and women to the responsibilities attendant to the harmonious functioning of the new community. Jesus taught His followers in word and deed to consider the gender difference irrelevant to the concerns and to the processes of the kingdom of God.

The New Community

Acts

- Pentecost – Acts 2:15-21
 - They were all being filled with the Holy Spirit and the human race was being united into one body
 - We are told that *I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh (RSV)*. Racial distinctions are irrelevant in the church. The sex difference is irrelevant in the church.
 - Differences of rank are irrelevant in the church.
 - Class differences are irrelevant in the church.
 - After the day of Pentecost, *multitudes, both of men and women* were welcomed into the fellowship of believers (Acts 5:14), and both men and women were baptized (Acts 8:12).
 - Pentecost means that New Testament ministry is patterned on the Old Testament function of prophecy and not on the offices of kings or priests. Jesus ended the kingly office when God seated him as the everlasting high priest.
 - New Testament ministers are at times called prophets, and at least one ministerial office, recognized in the New Testament, is that of the prophets. Old Testament precedent, Joel's prophecy, Pentecost's fulfillment, and evidences of women in ministry in the New Testament church remind us that prophetic ministry is open to both women and men. The only qualifications for this kind of ministry are that one be called, gifted, and anointed by the Spirit. If we judge fitness for ministry on this criteria, women qualify equally with men.

The Epistles

- Baptism – Galatians 3:26-29
 - *All who are in Christ become "sons (or children) of God" (v.26)* Out of diversity, all join a community in which members are *all one in Christ Jesus* (v. 28)
 - The sign of being part of God's community is no longer circumcision which was only available to men, but baptism that is available to men and women.

- Persons who by faith identify themselves with Christ receive a new identity that holds them together in community as equals.
- *There is neither Jew nor Greek (or Gentile), there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female (v. 28)*
- These verses teach that true unity cannot be achieved without equal opportunity for participation in the life of the church regardless of race, class, and sex.
- Equal rights in Christian Service – I Corinthians 7:32-35
 - Paul speaks to the unmarried male and female, suggesting that both unmarried male and unmarried female are able to pursue more vigorously *the affairs of the Lord (RSV)*.

Paul and his treatment of women

In Paul's culture, men and women were separated during worship. If you view the ancient synagogue in Capernaum you will find the remains of a balcony above a portion of the main meeting room of the synagogue constructed in such a way that anyone seated there would be hidden from view and anyone entering or leaving would be forced to use steep outside stairs. This is where the women and girls worshiped, just as females and males were separated outside the temple in Jerusalem. This was the culture Paul lived in when he wrote his letters to the churches. Men worshipped on the main floor, and women might be present in public worship, but only in a separate chamber, silent and unseen.

In light of the culture, Paul's practice of having women and men together in worship and his approval of women as well as men leading in worship would have been shocking for that time.

We have seen Jesus' model of respect for women in the gospels. We will now look at Paul's writing to understand that Paul also expressed the same respect modeled by Jesus.

- When Paul, then Saul, persecuted the Christians, he made no distinction between men and women. Paul recalled how he had *persecuted this Way as far as to death, binding and delivering to prisons both men and women, as even the high priest and all the council of elders witness concerning me (Acts 22:4-5)*. This would indicate that Paul saw women as well as men strong advocates of the Christian faith and enemies of Judaism. Since Paul began his relationship with Christianity by treating women and men the same, it seems unlikely that he would favor one over the other after his conversion.
- When Paul accompanied Silas and Luke to Philippi, his first convert was Lydia, one of the women whom he baptized (Acts 16:11-15). Paul's message continued to be aimed at both women and men, and wherever he preached, both sexes responded.
- Priscilla and her husband, Aquila, were coworkers with Paul, and they risked much for the ministry. It was in their house that the church met (Rom 16:3-4, 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19).

- Paul writes to the church in Philippi, specifically names Euodia (yoo OH dih uh) and Syntyche (SIN tih kee), asking that they end their dispute. His concern for these two women indicates their importance to the church. In his letter he writes, *help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with both Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life (Phil. 4:2-3).*
- The first resurrection teaching (John 11:23-27) is to Martha. She becomes the first person in history to be given an understanding of the correlation between the person of Jesus (whoever lives and believes in me), and His own resurrection (“though he dies, yet shall he live”).
- Women exercised the gift of prophecy. Besides Paul himself, seven men and four women are identified as prophets in the Book of Acts (Acts 11:27, 13:1, 15:32, 21:9,10)
- Paul referred to the act of women praying and prophesying during public worship, and he did so in a casual manner, as if such a practice was well established (1 Cor. 11:4-5). Nothing is said that women should desire only certain gifts.
- In Romans 16 Paul commended Phoebe, a servant or deacon of the church. The word describing her is translated “minister” in other places when referring to Paul (Eph. 3:7; Col. 1:23, 25), Timothy (1 Tim. 4:6), and other men. He goes on to say that she has been a helper to him and to many others, using a word for helper that can be translated “leader, chief, ruler, president, or guardian,” and is used in the Old Testament for a chief officer for kings (1 Chron. 27:31; 29:6).

The Hard Sayings of Paul Related to Ministry

No man has been criticized more for his allegedly negative portrayal of women than the Apostle Paul. Paul’s letters are occasional letters, that is, they were occasioned by specific circumstances and address certain situations as responses to them.

1 Corinthians 11

- 1 Corinthians 11 begins with Paul’s discussion regarding “headship.” There has been long and lengthy debate regarding the exact translation of the Greek word *kephale*. In some instances it is meant to designate “authority”, but it is used in other instances to denote “source.” So as man is the source of woman, so is God the source of man. It is possible that Paul is speaking of man (Adam) as his wife’s “source,” being made from Adam’s rib.
- In 1 Corinthians 11:7, Paul wrote that woman is “the glory of man.” He also wrote that “man is the image and glory of God.” Is Paul placing women in a subordinate role to men? There are many who interpret this scripture basing their understanding on Genesis 3:16 “Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.” This scripture is traditionally used to degrade women. But Paul makes four statements that contradict this interpretation.
 - First, he stated that woman is the glory of man. She is not the distraction of men, nor an object to be owned and used, but the very glory of man.

- Second, Paul reminded his readers that woman was created because man needs woman (1 Cor. 11:9). “Neither was the man created for the sake of the woman, but the woman for the sake of the man.” What Paul states is that man truly needs woman. He was reminding his Jewish readers that before God said Eve’s desire should be for her husband, Adam already needed Eve. He was reminding his Gentile readers that disdain of women is unrealistic and unnatural.
- Third, Paul added in 1 Cor. 11:11, “Nevertheless, neither woman without man nor man without woman in the Lord.” Each needs the other. Paul was writing this in the context of discussing public worship.
- Finally, in 1 Cor. 11:12, Paul made a further statement about the creation of Adam and Eve that topples traditional interpretation. “For as the woman out of the man,” his words read literally, “so also the man out of woman; but all things out of God.” Paul drives us to understand that although Eve was created out of Adam, all men since have come out of woman (“was born of woman”). He added the reminder that all things are products of God’s creation.

1 Corinthians 14:29-35

- Later in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, he makes the statement that, “As in all the churches of the saints, let the women in the churches be silent, for it is not permitted for them to speak. Instead, let them be silent, as the law says. But if they wish to learn anything, let them question their own husbands at home for it is a shame for a woman to speak in church” (1 Cor. 14:”33b-35). If taken literally, a woman is to make no sound during worship. When the worship bulletin called for a verbal expression in unison, only men would be permitted to read the words aloud. Instead of this very literal translation, Paul’s words have been used to bar women from preaching, leading in worship, or even serving sacramental bread and wine. The context of Paul’s words is public worship. His central theme was “For God is not (a God) of confusion, but of peace.” (1 Cor. 14:33a). The word that is usually translated “confusion” or sometimes “discord” is *akatastasia* (*aka-tas-ta-SEE-a*). Paul wrote that he did not want *akatastasia* in their public worship. In order to provide orderliness to their worship, Paul gave three instructions: (1) only two persons, or at the most three, may speak in tongues, and then only if there are interpreters present (vv. 27-28); (2) only two or three may prophesy, and they must take turns, each weighing the words of the others (vv 29-32); and (3) women are to be silent in church (v.34a). How could Paul approve of women praying and prophesying during public worship in chapter 11 and then write that women must remain silent during public worship in chapter 14. The Greek word used in Paul’s letter was not one of command or forcing someone to be silent. Paul used instead the Greek verb *sigao* (sig-AH-o) when he wrote, “Let the women in the churches be silent.” *Sigao* is a voluntary silence. It was used to describe the decision of the disciples to remain silent about the transfiguration that they had just witnessed (Luke 9:36), and when Jesus told the Pharisees that if his disciples were silent (as the Pharisees insisted) then the

very stones would cry out (Luke 19:40). It was used to describe Jesus' silence during his trial before Pilate (Mark 14:61), and the silence of the apostles and elders as they listened to a report by Paul and Barnabas when they returned from their missionary journey (Acts 15:12). *Sigao* is the kind of silence asked for in the midst of disorder and clamor. Paul asked the women in Corinth to keep that kind of silence. He did not write that women are not to preach, or teach, or declare, or give a discourse, or proclaim, or affirm, or aver, or speak for something, or any other of the distinctive meanings found in many of the words in Greek that relate to speaking. Paul wrote that women are to *laleo* (la-LAY-o). Of all the verbs that can be translated "speak," only *laleo* can also mean, simply, "talk." If someone wanted to write "Please do not talk during the prayers," the verb would have to be *laleo*. Since Paul's instructions were given to a congregation troubled with tumult and discord during the worship services, he told the women not to *laleo*—that is, not to converse. According to the writer John Bristow, Paul was telling them that it is shameful for women to keep talking during the worship service. Unlike men, women were unaccustomed to listening to public speakers or to participating in public worship.

- Paul's intent in writing to the Corinthians is to avoid contention within the church. It is clear that Paul engages in issues with which his congregation is struggling, including gender issues from the culture. However, Paul nowhere in this text subordinates the woman, failing even to touch on that issue.
- It is more likely that Paul is restricting the only kind of speech directly addressed in these verses: asking questions. It was common in the ancient world for hearers to interrupt teachers with questions, but it was considered rude if the questions reflected ignorance of the topic. Since women were normally considerably less educated than men, Paul proposes a short-range solution and a long-range solution to the problem. His short-range solution is that women should stop asking the disruptive questions; the long-range solution is that they should be educated, receiving private tutoring from their husbands. His long-range solution affirms women's ability to learn and places them on equal footing with men.

1 Timothy 2:11-15

- The precise meaning of the rare Greek term here used for "take authority" has been questioned. Some scholars suggest that it normally means simply "have authority" and that the passage thus excludes women from exercising any authority in the church at all. Other scholars have shown that it is often used more strongly than that in the period, and may mean "seize authority"; on this reading, Paul merely forbids women to grasp for authority overbearingly, in the same way he would have forbidden it to men. Still other scholars have appealed to other examples within the semantic range of the term to argue for meanings like "domineer in a murderous way" or "proclaim oneself originator." However, Paul and his intended readers assumed the situation which elicited his response and its intended meaning. Clues in the text indicate the following situation: male false teachers (1 Tim 1:20; 2 Tim 2:17) have been introducing dangerous heresy into the Ephesian church (1 Tim 1:4-7; 6:3-5), often beginning by gaining access

to its women. Because the women were still not trained in the Scriptures, they were more susceptible to the false teachers and could provide a network through which the false teachers could disrupt the church and undermine its public witness. Whether because the women were uneducated and particularly susceptible to error, or because their seizing authority would have injured the church's witness in a tense social situation, or (most likely) both, the specific situation Paul address invites his specific response. He again provides a short-range and a long-range solution. The short-range solution is: They should not take ruling positions as teachers in the church. The long-range solution is: Let them learn.

Conclusion

Since Paul in other passages allows women an unusual role in the church, the prohibitions in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and 1 Timothy 2:11-15 were directed at situations that called for correction. If we were there and knew the particulars of the cases, we would have agreed that Paul was right. When the inner attitudes change, the external institutions collapse for lack of support, i.e. slavery. Women in ministry is not a question of rights—neither women's to be gained or men's to be lost. The issues are gifts, body life, and the law of love. What does one do if she or he feels called and gifted for particular service but the body does not agree? Then one submits in love and waits until God either directs to a body that will receive the ministry or until the original body changes its mind. Paul was among the more progressive, not the more chauvinistic, writers of his day.

Servant Leadership and Authority

- Throughout the Gospels, Jesus teaches servant leadership. According to Jesus the appropriate locus of authority rests within the congregation and not in a leader above it. (Matthew 20:20-28)
 - As Matthew 18:17-18 prescribes, authority is indeed to be exercised in Christian communities, but only on the basis of participatory consensual community rule. Christ refuses to allow any one person to assume in church or family the authority that belongs to Him.
 - The Christian teacher is only a proclaimer of Christ's teaching, never of his or her own.
 - Whether in church or family, the "greatest" should provide leadership by empowering others for participation rather than by wielding authority over them.
 - Leadership is someone getting together with one or more persons to determine what God wants them to do. A leader is a team worker not an order giver.
 - The authority resides in message, not in the men and women who take it to the world.
 - It is when the concept of ministry as servanthood grows dim, men begin to restrict women in ministry positions.

- Neither women nor men should seek official positions in order to exert control over others, but rather to serve them. Only this kind of leadership is consistent with the teachings and example of Christ.

Summary

- Experience bears out that when women are encouraged in the use of their gifts and given opportunity to help guide the church, there is much profit.
- The apparently straightforward passages prohibiting women's involvement in church leadership need to be interpreted in light of those Scriptures that support women in ministry.
- Where men recognize the biblical examples and encouragement to women to use their gifts in God's work and are not threatened by women's involvement, they profit greatly from the added insights, challenge, and support offered by women.
- Wise, spirit-filled women and men will need to develop ways of affirming and developing each other's gifts.
- Finally, Jesus tells us that we can discern between a false prophet and true prophet by their fruit (Matt. 7:15-23). No one would deny the salvation of another simply because they were won through the ministry of a woman rather than a man. Therefore, if the lives of women ministers/leaders are morally upright and doctrinally sound and people are brought to the kingdom through their work, is that not good fruit? If the fruit is good, does that not indicate that the plant that produces it is sound? If women ministry/leadership is wrong, why does God use it for so many kingdom results?

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Scripture References

Creation

Genesis 1-2

The Fall

Genesis 3

Prominent Women in the Old Testament

Female authority in religious life:

Deborah – Judges 4-5

Huldah - II Kings 22:14

Female authority in civil life

Rahab – Joshua 2

Esther – Book of Esther
Ruth – Book of Ruth

Other women of prominence
Miriam - Exodus 15
Abigail - 1 Samuel 25
Proverbs 31:10-31

The Gospels

Christ has brought about a new creation: the old has gone, the new has come!" (2 Cor. 5:17)

Differences between Old Covenant and New Covenant

Galatians 4:4-7
John 11: 25-26
Acts 2:46
Ephesians 5:28

Jesus treatment of women

The sisters of Jesus – Matthew 12:46-50
Real blessedness – Luke 11:27-28
Choosing the best – Luke 10:38-42
Women disciples – Luke 8:3
Taught women – Matt. 14:21, 15:38,
Among his follower - Matt. 27:55
Journeying with male disciples - Luke 23:49, 55
Change in focus for the disciples – Luke 24:22

Women who followed Jesus

Mary Magdelene – Matt. 27:56, Luke 24:10, John 20:18, Mark 15:40-41

The New Community

Pentecost – Acts 2:15-21

The Epistles

Baptism – Galatians 3:26-29
Equal rights in Christian Service – 1 Corinthians 7:32-35

Paul and his treatment of women

No distinction between men and women – Acts 22:4-5
Lydia whom he baptized – Acts 16:11-15

Priscilla & Aquila – Rom. 16:3-4, 1 Cor. 16:19, 2 Tim. 4:19
Euodia and Syntyche – Phil. 4:2-3
Martha and resurrection teaching – John 11:23-27
Women exercised gift of prophecy – Acts 11:27, 13:1, 15:32, 21:9,10
Women praying and prophesying in public – 1 Cor. 11:4-5
Commending Phoebe – Romans 16

The Hard Sayings of Paul

1 Corinthians 11:3-11
1 Corinthians 14:29-35
1 Timothy 2:11-15

Servant Leadership

Matthew 20:20-28
Matthew 18:15-18
Philippians 2:7