

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Theological Study
Central Bible Church
2018-2019

INTRODUCTION

In 2018, the Elders of Central Bible Church launched a study of the Scriptures to discern the role of women in ministry within the local church. PBC drafted a “Doctrinal Position and Policy on Women’s Role in Teaching” in 1999 and updated the paper in 2004. The position stated below *generally* follows the same conclusion. What was lacking in the original document, however, was a clear explanation regarding “teaching” and a substantive biblical rationale for the position. The more recent study by our Elder Board was motivated by the desire to “give every woman the opportunity to express her spiritual gifts in every ministry that the Bible permits.”

Opinions about women in ministry fall on a theological spectrum between complementarianism (women and men have complementary roles in the local church, but there are some roles women may not assume) and egalitarianism (women may assume any role in the local church that men fill). Often, adherents to each position, and the variety of positions between, express a reasonable, biblical rationale for their position. This paper respects the theological work of others, but the leadership of Central Bible Church bears the weight of responsibility to search God’s Word to understand God’s will as best we are able and then apply it to our local church context.

A few guiding principles must be kept in mind before surveying the relevant texts.

First, culture changes but God’s Word remains the same. Since God doesn’t change (Malachi 3:6), we believe that God’s truth is constant, no matter what happens in culture. What *does* change is our understanding of truth and our application of truth. Responsible study of this topic will discover timeless truth that must be applied to our particular cultural context.

Second, church has changed over time. While we model our church after the New Testament church, we must understand that contemporary models of church are different because of space and time. For example, the New Testament doesn’t address the position of “associate” pastors, “youth” pastors or choral directors. Church organizations are much more complex (for better or for worse!) and different denominations put the locus of authority in different places (in an individual, in a Board, in the congregation). This must be taken into account when studying the Scriptures.

Third, this topic is non-essential. Some doctrines are more important than others for the Christian. But, the role of women in ministry does not carry the same weight as the authority of Scripture, the Trinity, the deity of Jesus, salvation by grace or the Second Coming, to name a few. This doesn’t mean the issue is not important. But honorable, scholarly theologians who hold to the inerrancy of Scripture have arrived at different conclusions and, therefore, charity is the appropriate response among those who disagree. One author notes, “Too often, more heat than light emerges when people get together to debate about women in ministry.” Grace must abound on both sides of the conversation.

Finally, the search is worth it. Though the topic of women in leadership is not the centerpiece of Christian theology, it is nonetheless important to study. The church should seek to dignify every individual and empower them to fulfill whatever calling God has put on his or her life. With this in mind, the following study is presented to help the people of Central Bible Church form a biblical view on women in leadership and, following the example of early Christians (Acts 15), to do “what seems best to us” in our local church.

RELEVANT TEXTS

A search of relevant biblical literature identifies several key texts addressing the value of women, the equality of women to men, order in the family and church and the restrictions of women in the early church. Each of these texts will be considered.

Genesis 1-3

The creation account affirms the essential equality of men and women. Both are made in the image of God and possess equal, intrinsic value. Moreover, both man *and* woman were given the mandate to “*be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it*” (Genesis 1:28). A survey of Scripture provides much evidence of women sharing similar responsibilities as men throughout biblical history:

- > God made His covenant with men and women (Deuteronomy 29:1-11)
- > Women ministered at the entrance to the Tabernacle (Exodus 38:8, 1 Samuel 2:22)
- > Women brought their offerings to the priest (Leviticus 1, 15; 1 Samuel 2:19)
- > God spoke directly to women (Genesis 16:7-19)
- > Women could make Nazarite vows (Numbers 6:2)
- > Women were prophetesses (Miriam, Exodus 15:20-21; Huldah, 2 Kings 22:14; Luke 2:36)
- > Women were judges (Deborah, Judges 4:4)
- > Women were coequal in their parenting honor (Exodus 20:12, Leviticus 19:3)
- > Mothers are parallel to fathers in Proverbs 6:20, 10:1, 15:20, 17:25, 19:26, 20:20, 23:22-25
- > Women were included in the genealogical record of Jesus
- > Jesus called attention to the faith of specific women (Luke 7:36-40, Mark 12:41-44)
- > Jesus addressed a woman as a “daughter of Abraham” (Luke 13:10-17)
- > Women were part of Jesus’ entourage (Luke 8:1-4, Matthew 27:55-56, Mark 15:40-41)
- > Women were included in the early spread of the Gospel
- > Women were in the Upper Room (Acts 1:14) and spoke in tongues (Acts 2:17-18)
- > Women were included in the missionary expansion (Lydia, Acts 16:14-15)
- > A woman advised David (2 Samuel 14) and another instructed Apollos (Acts 18:26)
- > Women were prophetesses (Acts 21:9) and served in the church (Phoebe, Romans 16:1)

While there are many similarities between the sexes, it should not be missed that the Genesis account also highlights differences among man and woman. God did not create man and woman simultaneously, but gave man priority (primogeniture). Woman was created “from man” (Genesis 2:21), signifying his responsibility for her formation, not the other way around. Eve is Adam’s “helper” (*ezer*; Genesis 2:18)—a word that often communicates a subordinate role. In Genesis 2:23, the woman is named by man, signifying his role or authority in her life. As such, Adam, not Eve, received the initial commands directly from God (Genesis 2:16) and had the responsibility, as her head, to communicate them to his wife.

It is important to note that this priority *preceded* the Fall of Genesis 3. Some wrongly argue that male headship is the unfortunate consequence of sin and man’s domination of woman. But, God’s divine design determined that there would be a functional ordering of the sexes with man and woman possessing essential equality but different, complementary roles in marriage and in their community. It is not surprising that this “essential equality and functional subordination” would be God’s intentional design from the beginning because, as Image-Bearers, men and women reflect the mystery of the Trinity where the Son subordinates Himself to the Father’s will without any loss of His essential equality.

What the Fall *did* do is incite the temptation to abandon these roles. In Genesis 3, Adam abdicated his husbandly responsibility to be a godly example for his wife, leaving Eve vulnerable to the enemy’s attack. Among the penalties for sin, God announced to the woman that “*Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you*” (Genesis 3:16). Given the fact that the whole curse text (vv. 14-19)

is an inversion of God's harmonious design of creation, it seems right to read verse 16 negatively rather than positively. The phrase "desire will be" and "rule over" is repeated in Genesis 4:7 where Cain is warned about the desire of sin to control him and the necessity of him fighting against it. Thus, God announces that woman will seek to dominate her husband and he, in return, will dominate her to maintain his leadership. Foh writes, "Sin has ruined the marital dance, the easy, loving lead of the husband and the natural following of the wife. In its place are struggle, tyranny, domination, manipulation and subterfuge" (*Women in Ministry: Four Views*, IVP Academic, p. 75).

CONCLUSION: God created men and women equally with complementary roles in creation. While they share essential equality, they nonetheless possess functional differences that reflect the same in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Fall threatened to obliterate these differences and produce a struggle of leadership between men and women.

1 Corinthians 11:2-16

I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the teachings, just as I passed them on to you.

³ Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. ⁴ Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. ⁵ And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is just as though her head were shaved. ⁶ If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved off, she should cover her head. ⁷ A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. ⁸ For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; ⁹ neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. ¹⁰ For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head.

¹¹ In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. ¹² For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God. ¹³ Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? ¹⁴ Does not the very nature of things 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 long hair is given to her as a covering. ¹⁶ If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God.

This text continues Paul's emphasis in 10:31 that Christians should do everything "to the glory of God." Thus, Paul's emphasis is "glory"—a theme he continues in this section. It is significant that Paul does endorse women praying and prophesying in church (v. 5), but expects them to do so in a way that honors (glorifies) God, their husbands and themselves so that they "*Do not cause anyone to stumble*" (10:32).

The passage begins with Paul congratulating the Corinthian Christians for "holding to the teachings," clearly reminding them that what he is about to tell them isn't new information, but principles which have been previously communicated and should be followed. In verse 3, Paul states that the "head of the woman is man," and places this teaching between two timeless, unchanging truths (the head of man is Christ and the head of Christ is God). We conclude then, whatever Paul means by "head," it is not a culture-bound principle, but a normative practice for all churches at all times.

There is debate regarding what Paul means when he uses the term "head" (13 times; *kephale*), a word which can mean either "source" or "authority," depending on context. If the first, Paul is meaning that all women come from the seed of man, a point that seems hardly necessary to make in the discussion at

hand. Moreover, it makes no sense to say that “God is the source of Christ.” Rather, because of Paul’s insistence that a woman have her head covered as a “sign of authority” (v. 10), it seems natural to take *kephale* as meaning “authority.” This is keeping with the most common and clear use of *kephale* in the New Testament (see Colossians 2:10).

With this in mind, Paul is teaching the following principles:

- > Man is the authoritative head over woman in the way that Christ is man’s head and the Father has authority over the Son.
- > A woman may pray and/or prophesy in the church, but she must do so with her head literally covered as a “sign” that she does so “under authority.” A woman’s hair is her God-given sign of authority-cover and so, a woman should not shave her head lest she disgrace herself as being one not under authority.
- > Conversely, men should not grow their hair long and thus appear to be a woman, violating the position of authority granted to him by God. To do so would be the dishonor his head, that is, God, and abdicate his image-bearing position as head.
- > This principle is reflected in General Revelation—that men and women are unique in their roles. Paul’s use of “nature of things” parallels his similar use in Romans 1:26-27 of the things that are known to all through the created order.

The key, but difficult, phrase in this text is verse 7: “*A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man.*” As we have already discussed above, both men and women are made in the image of God. So, the “glory” Paul intends in this text cannot be an essential difference but a functional one. Man’s unique glory is in his priority creation by God. Woman was created from man.

It is interesting at this point to note that the only role *not* open to women in the Old Testament was the position of priest. Even though ancient, pagan religions employed priestesses, God directed Israel to allow only Aaron and his male descendants to occupy the office (Exodus 28, Leviticus 9). The traditional Jewish and Christian conclusion is that God wanted to “mirror His principle of male headship in creation by reserving His ‘highest’ position among religious leaders for men” (Blomberg in *Two Views On Women in Ministry*, Zondervan, p. 133). In other words, God appointed men to reflect His authority in creation. Because Adam was created directly by God and Eve from Adam, man leads and woman comes under this headship.

No sooner does the Apostle explain this than he reminds his readers of their mutuality of submission. Neither man nor woman are independent of one another and, in truth, they both give something to the other (vv. 11-12). This brings to mind Paul’s reminder in Ephesians 5 that “wives are to submit to their husbands” but both husband and wife are to “submit to one another in love.” These are not contradictory ideas. Rather, Paul teaches first about roles and then addresses a spiritual of mutuality to protect relationships from the domineering spirit cautioned in Genesis 3:16.

CONCLUSION: As women exercise their God-given gifts and contribute to the church, they should do so with respect to their God-given role. They may pray or prophesy (and exercise a variety of other spiritual gifts), not as one having authority, but with humble deference to the authority given by God to men who lead the church.

1 Corinthians 14:33-35

Much of 1 Corinthians 14 is Paul's instruction on the proper exercise of the gifts of tongues and prophecy in order to prevent disorder in the church's corporate gatherings. In verses 26-33, Paul gives several principles which must be followed: 1) if someone speaks in a tongue, someone else should interpret or else the speaker should keep quiet; 2) when someone prophesies, others should weigh the legitimacy of what the prophet has spoken; 3) everyone is permitted to exercise their gift of prophecy (there is no limitation given for women); 4) all that is done must be orderly. With these instructions, Paul remind his readers of the practice that is in all the congregations: *"[W]omen should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. ³⁵ If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. (vv. 34-35)*

Four words used will help us with a clear interpretation of this text: "silent," "speak," "submission" and "inquire." First, when Paul commands a woman to "remain silent," he cannot literally mean that women are not permitted to utter any word in church. This would contradict the great liberty given to women in the New Testament to learn, teach, pray, prophecy and correct. As we will see in 1 Timothy 2 below, the word carries less of the presence/absence of speech and more of the disposition of a person. A silent person is "peaceable and quiet."

The word "speak" (*laleo*) appears more than 20 times in this chapter. Each time, outside of Paul's command in verses 34-35, the word means a specific kind of speech: tongues, the interpretation of tongues, prophecy or the interpretation of prophecy. Given the context of this passage where "others are weighing" what prophets say (v. 29), it seems reasonable that Paul is warning a woman (more specifically, a wife) about challenging the interpretation of revelation lest she contribute to the chaos. A woman is certainly allowed to speak prophecy (see 1 Corinthians 11:5 above), but, in the discussion regarding the doctrinal validity of a tongues-speaker or prophet's message, a woman is not allowed to debate as one with authority in the church. This is supported by the next two words.

If a woman wishes to "inquire" (v. 35, *mathein*), she must do so privately with her husband. The word in this context means more than a simple question. It infers "learning with the intent to teach or correct." The same word is used in verse 31 for "instructed." Paul's point, therefore, is that a woman should discuss her concerns about the interpretations of tongues and prophecy with her husband, not in a public discourse. In doing so, a woman demonstrates godly "submission" to her husband as her spiritual head. She should not put herself in the place of publically challenging authoritative doctrine. It is "disgraceful" for a women to assert herself as the corrective authority of church doctrine.

CONCLUSION: Women are free to participate in and contribute to all the ministries of the church. However, when it comes to the discernment of correct doctrine, a woman is not permitted to assert authority. It is better that she discuss disagreements with her husband, her head, and resist contributing to chaos in her church.

1 Timothy 2:11-15

A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴ And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. ¹⁵ But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.

Many Christians begin their study of women's roles in the church with this passage. However, this text only makes sense in the context of the other relevant texts stated above. A proper understanding of this text will help local churches draw biblical boundaries regarding women in leadership.

It should not be missed that this passage follows Paul's instructions that Christians should respect all authority (v. 2:1-2) so that all may live peaceable and quiet lives. In verses 9-10, the Apostle cautions women about being "inappropriate"—warning against adorning themselves with jewelry and hair but not attending to the inner life. In the chapter that follows 1 Timothy 2:11-15, Paul spends time detailing the qualifications for church leaders. He concludes by stating that these things were being passed down so that "*you will know how people ought to conduct themselves in God's household, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and foundation of truth*" (3:15). Thus, the appropriateness in the church, especially regarding authority and orderliness is the topic at hand.

In this context, Paul encourages women to "*learn in quietness and full submission*" (v. 11). Against traditional Jewish practice, women were afforded the opportunity to learn (see Mary sitting at the feet of her rabbi, Jesus, in Luke 10:38-42). But, emphasis in this verses isn't on learning, but the *way* in which women are to learn: "in quietness and full submission." The word "quietness" is synonymous to the peaceable disposition (v. 2; see also 1 Corinthians 14:34 above). And, the command to be "submissive" fits the context of regarding authority (v. 2). Women were permitted to participate in doctrinal learning, but like the command of 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 above, they were not allowed to publically challenge authority by disputing doctrine.

Paul goes further and states that he does not "*permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent*" (2:12). As in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35, Paul clearly doesn't mean that a woman must be completely silent, unable to say *anything* in church. Her "silence" much be in regards to a certain kind of talking. The other New testament uses of *hesychia* ("silence") in Acts 22:2, 2 Thessalonians 3:12 and 1 Timothy 2:2 refer to the kind of lives people should live—peaceful and quiet—not devoid of speech.

The kind of teaching that Paul forbids (*didaskalia*) most often carries the idea of "authoritative teaching" (see Colossians 1:28; 1 Timothy 4:11, 6:2; 2 Timothy 2:2). Throughout the New Testament, it is used "to denote the careful transmission of the tradition concerning Jesus Christ and the authoritative proclamation of God's will to believers" (*Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, Crossway, 185). Thus, the teaching and authority Paul is speaking of is teaching *with* authority—not teaching or possessing authority in general.

The question is, where is authoritative teaching demonstrated in the local church? The answer comes in the verses that follow: In the role of elder. Church elders have the primary responsibility to guard and teach the official doctrine of the church. Paul taught that men were appointed as elders (only masculine pronouns are used in the elder qualification texts and there is no evidence of female elders in the biblical text or in early church practice) and, therefore, only men may occupy the position of leading, guarding and delivering the official church doctrine.

Some have argued that Paul's limitation for women was specific to a certain situation in Ephesus—the spread of false teaching among a divisive group of women. While errant doctrine was a significant concern (see 1:3-11), it would not have made sense for Paul to prohibit a female heretic's teaching of men, but allow them to teach women and children. Others have argued that Paul's use of *authentein* ("authority") indicated that some women were teaching in a domineering way and, if a woman were more patient and kind in her delivery, they would be permitted to teach. If this were the case, Paul certainly would not have limited his instructions to women teachers only. Rather, Paul's concern was that no woman should have authority over the men who have authority over the church.

Paul follows the command with a reason: *“For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner”* (vv. 13-14). God’s design from the beginning was to give men priority of leadership in their families and in the church. Satan’s cunning temptation came to and through the woman because she had not been given God’s original prohibition. Her sin resulted, in part, because she had not been adequately covered by her husband.

CONCLUSION: The proper operation of the church requires authority and submission. God has appointed men in the office of Elder with the responsibility to guard and teach correct doctrine to the church. Though a woman may exercise her ministry gifts, she may not occupy the office or the role of “teaching authority” in her local church.

Galatians 3:26-29

Paul writes, *“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”* This verse has been used to suggest that the Gospel neutralizes any role distinctions between men and women. In Christ, women have a new liberty to do what they were unable to do under the restrictive Law. However, this isn’t what Paul is teaching.

The preceding verses highlight the promise of salvation anticipated by the Law. The following verses (4:1-7) continue the theme of people “enslaved to the Law” until the right time of the Messiah who set us free and adopted us as sons. With this in mind, verses 3:26-29 are strictly soteriological, not functional. This section answers the question, “Who may be saved?”

The Jewish opinion in Paul’s day was that neither Gentiles, women nor slaves could access the privileges of salvation available to free, Jewish men. Surprisingly, Paul writes that salvation has come to *all*, irrespective of social status, ethnicity or gender. His goal is to announce the accessibility of salvation to women as well as men, not explain the social relationships and roles between individuals. Paul no more demolished the gender distinctions between men and women any more than he did the ethnic differences between Gentiles and Jew.

This equality was proved by Jesus who contravened cultural norms to minister to women. He dared to have a conversation with a Samaritan woman at the well and touched a woman with an issue of blood. Jesus invited women into His inner circle (i.e., Mary Magdalene) and welcomed Mary to sit at his feet, the posture of a student learning from their rabbi. Women were given equal standing in regards to divorce, were the first witnesses to the resurrection and were commended to be heralds of the Gospel to the world. No doubt, the Gospel inaugurated a new equality between men and women. But, this equality was in regards to the worth of the individual and their accessibility to the Gospel message.

CONCLUSION: The Gospel doesn’t discriminate. Salvation has come to all people no matter their gender, age, ethnicity, education, or economic standing. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ share a unity with one another and are co-heirs of the promises of God.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9

Though not specifically addressing the topic of women in leadership, Paul's biblical qualifications regarding elders help to delineate exactly which authoritative leadership and teaching positions in the local church are limited to men only. In these two similar passages, the Apostle provides a list of necessary qualities for an elder or "overseer": above reproach, sober, hospitable, generous, holy and disciplined, to name a few. Two specific qualifications are notable for this study.

First, the elder must be "the husband of one wife" (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6). Remembering that the church is the "bride of Christ" (Ephesians 5:22-25) and the "household of God" (1 Timothy 3:15), it is not surprising that Paul would state that Elders are to be men (also notice the use of only masculine pronouns throughout these passages). This is consistent with description of husbands being the "head of their wife" (Ephesians 5:23), and therefore, the head of their literal households. Moreover, this would establish continuity with the Old Testament limitation of the priesthood—the highest level of spiritual authority in the community—to men.

Second, the elder must be "able to teach" (1 Timothy 3:2) so that he can "give instruction in sound doctrine and also rebuke those who contradict it" (Titus 1:9). The role of the elder is to shepherd the flock by guiding and guarding the doctrine of the church. Their teaching mandate doesn't include any and every time truth is taught in church, but specifically the definition and dissemination of official doctrine among its members. In the early church, elders were relied upon to teach, explain and refute various doctrines—many of which had never been understood to new Christians.

CONCLUSION: Just as God has appointed husbands to lead their families, so He has chosen for men to lead the household of the church, the family of God. Elder leadership is limited to male candidates with the specific responsibility of guiding and guarding official church doctrine. In this role, elders possess teaching authority over their local church, a responsibility that God has not granted women.

Romans 16:1 and 1 Timothy 3:11

Both of these passages are important in regards to the discussion around deacons in the local church and, specifically, whether a woman could serve in this role. In Romans 16:1, Phoebe is commended as a "servant of the church in Cenchreae" (lit. a *diakonos*). Equal evidence may be offered on either side of the debate supporting Phoebe simply as a "servant" or a "deaconess." Given the fact that her title (servant/deaconess) is linked to a specific place (church in Cenchreae) gives slightly more weight to her fulfilling an office rather than having the quality of servanthood.

The qualifications for Deacons are provided in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. In verse 11, Paul requires, *"In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything."* Because the word "their" does not appear in Greek and because "wives" may also be translated "women," it is plausible that Paul is providing instruction to women who assume the office of deacon. This view is reasonably supported by:

- > The fact that Paul *does not* give instructions to the wives of elders—a strange omission if he were focusing on spouses.
- > The word "likewise" in v. 11 appears to be parallel with the same word in v. 8, indicating that the writer is moving from office to office with similar expectation.
- > The qualities expected of women in v. 11 are similar to the qualities expected of elders and male deacons in the verses preceding.

CONCLUSION: Because deacons are not given the role of teaching authority within the local church, the office may be held by men or women. This important role is a servant ministry that enables the elders to “not neglect the ministry of the Word” (Acts 6:2) and helps the local church to meet the needs of its members as it fulfills its mission.

CONCLUSIONS

Study of these primary texts and their contexts yields a consistent pattern in God’s plan for women in ministry. We conclude these guiding principles:

- Women are made in the image of God, equally valuable as men and frequently employed in ministry throughout biblical history.
- In the Creation account, God creates man first and, from man, creates woman. Man is given responsibility for God’s command and names the woman. This principle of primogeniture gives man leadership priority. This design of “essential unity and functional subordination” is found in the Trinity. Therefore, male priority in leadership does not diminish a woman’s dignity as one made in the Image of God.
- The Fall reflects man’s neglect of authority and the consequences of the Fall predict woman’s struggle to assert priority and man’s temptation to dominate.
- The Gospel doesn’t discriminate against or subordinate women in regards to salvation. Jesus regarded women and men similarly and, contrary to cultural norms, Paul affirmed that salvation was available to the slave, the Gentile and the woman.
- Women are permitted to teach and even to teach men (i.e., Priscilla instructed Apollos, women “announced” the resurrection of Jesus to men, women prophesied in mixed-gender company). A woman is not permitted to teach in a context that is viewed as the authoritative teaching platform of her church.
- God is concerned about order and propriety in the church, especially as it relates to authority structures.
- Elders are charged to guide and guard the doctrine of the local church, the family of God. God has limited this office to men only, as a reflection of their responsibility to lead their households and families. The elder’s teaching authority may not be assumed by a woman. However, where teaching does not carry the weight of distinguishing the official doctrine of the church, women are free to teach.
- A qualified woman may take the role of Deaconess. This servant-leadership position supports the ministry of Elders and greatly enables the church to fulfill its mission in the world.

APPLICATION

This is how Central Bible Church applies this study in our local context.

- We encourage all women and men to discover and use their spiritual gifts in the Body of church.
- Because the office of elder guards the official doctrine of our church, this position is limited to qualified men.
- Because the preaching platform is considered to be communication of “official doctrine” of our church, the Sunday morning preaching ministry is limited to elder qualified men, whether they are officially elders or not.
- A woman is permitted to speak and share in a Sunday morning worship service or any other venue where it is not viewed that she is asserting a position of authority in the church.
- A woman is permitted to teach men and women in non-authoritative-teaching venues such as children’s ministry, student ministry, Home Groups or Community Groups.
- A woman may serve in Deaconess serving role (Shepherd, Home Group Leader, Student Ministry leader, etc.)