

Why do Women and Gender Studies Matter at a Christian University?

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* = Advance PowerPoint slide

At the beginning of my Ph.D. studies in New Testament at Cambridge University in 1973, I heard a lecturer state that he believed there was no passage in the New Testament rightly understood in its original context that limits the ministry of women. I almost jumped up to shout, “That’s not true.” I was thinking of 1 Timothy 2:12, which I thought said, “I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man.” To prove he was wrong, I read 1 Timothy in Greek that night and each night for several months. Finally, I had to acknowledge that I could not disprove him from this verse. After all, the first full paragraph of the letter is all about false teachings in Ephesus, and almost every sentence of the letter relates to it. Furthermore, chapter 5 states that younger widows had followed after Satan and were going about from house to house, which is where the churches met, saying things they ought not. In that situation, it would make perfect sense for Paul to restrict teaching by women. But this need not limit their ministry everywhere.

The more I studied, the more I learned how wrong I had been about what the Bible teaches about man and woman. After 36 years of research, I finally finished my book on this. It advocates the very position I began determined to disprove. Why? Because Scripture itself forced me to change!

Even after I accepted the full equality of women in ministry, I still wanted my wife to include in her marriage vows that she would submit to my leadership. I now see that I misunderstood that, too.

Women and gender studies matter at a Christian university because they matter to God who created men and women equally in his image and gave both dominion over the earth.

Yet in a 2005 Whitworth study, female students reported they are more often silenced, intimidated or felt less competent than men in the classroom regardless of major or GPA.

The 2007 survey of Whitworth freshman students showed that female students are less intellectually confident than their male peers. 58 percent of female students rated themselves “above average” in comparison to the average person their age in intellectual self-confidence, compared to 79 percent of male students, even though the women on average had consistently higher GPAs at both the high school and college level.

National research shows white males are more likely to receive praise and criticism than females or people of color. Women tend to receive neutral feedback. Hinnenkamp said, “It’s OK for a male to be outspoken about his opinion. When a woman does, she may have other attributes associated with it.” Consequently, women tend to censor themselves in class. John Yoder said, “The most striking theme voiced by virtually all the women was the fact that they ‘feared’ saying what they thought, especially about issues of gender justice, including sexual harassment.”

Gender sometimes also affects whom faculty mentor. Faculty mentors, don’t foreclose on people’s options, but listen to and care about each student. Students, if you have a passion, find a mentor who knows your field and pursue it.

According to the March 2007 Whitworth gender subcommittee, students perceive female faculty as less competent than male faculty. Terry McGonigal reports, “I’ve heard some of the female faculty say they’ve felt silenced or dismissed in the classroom.” Math Professor Susan Mabry said sometimes male students have not treated her with respect. Ginny Whitehouse said, “I have observed students eviscerate a female faculty member on minor issues, and I’ve observed male faculty with the exact same issues get a much more gentle response.

Julia Stronks said, “I have had students tell me that they value faculty stating facts when those faculty are male, and I’ve had those exact same students say that if I state something as fact, I need to prove it to them.”

Many men at Whitworth have no sense of how deeply these kinds of issues affect women. How does it feel when someone quotes the Bible to restrict your freedom or to undermine your goals? Because Whitworth is a Christian University we have a fundamental obligation to love each other and to seek diligently to understand God’s Word.

The 2005 Whitworth study found a resistance to females in ministry. One student, Kimmy Stokesbary, said, “I’ve always dreamed of being ordained, [but] there seems to be a constant attitude that I’m not respectable because I’m female and often less worthy than my male counterparts.”

Terry McGonigal said some students at Whitworth do not think women should be in ministry, often stemming from passages in First Corinthians and First Timothy. One Whitworth woman wrote, “I don’t understand why God would set up the world with some people less valuable, less equal than others.” Less critical, but still ambivalent, another wrote, “there’s just as much evidence scripturally to say women’s ministry is OK as evidence that says it’s not OK.”

I can personally appreciate the problem because I have been part of it. I grew up in a church with only male pastors and elders. How many of you grew up in churches with only male pastors and elders? Your experiences can carry over to classrooms and unconscious expectations that people in authority will be male and have male attributes. Unless you become aware of your unconscious expectations and challenge them by Scripture, you may carry them into your profession and marriage to your detriment.

Since misunderstanding Scripture is a key reason for gender conflict at Whitworth, and since this aspect of gender studies is what I am best qualified to address, this evening we’ll examine the twelve most commonly alleged biblical reasons for excluding women from leadership in the home and in the church.* Reason 1 alleges, “The Bible teaches ‘male headship’.”

In English, “the man is head of woman” and “the husband is head of his wife” convey that the man has authority over woman. Their contexts, however, explain that they mean, respectively, “the man Adam is the source of woman” and “a husband is a source of love and nourishment for his wife.” In Greek, the word for “head” was very rarely associated with leadership. The most exhaustive Greek dictionary (LSJ) lists forty-eight translations of it, but none means “leader” or “authority” or anything similar. Nearly all dictionaries covering native Greek usage up to New Testament times do not give even one example of “head” meaning authority.¹

¹ Moulton and Milligan, Friedrich Preisigke, Pierre Chantraine, S. C. Woodhouse and the thirteen additional lexicons cited by Richard S. Cervin, “Does *Kephalē* mean ‘Source’ or ‘Authority Over’ in Greek Literature? A Rebuttal,” *TJ* 10 NS (1989) 85–112, 86–87. This also applies to the LSJ supplement by R.

Many Greek dictionaries, however, list “source,” as a meaning of “head.” The point of Paul’s head-body metaphors with Christ as the head of his body the church is not that Christ is the authority of church (though he is, of course). Their point is that Christ is the source of life and nourishment for the church.² For instance, Colossians 1:18, “he is the head of the body, the church, who is the *archē* [“origin” NEB or “the source of the body’s life” TEV]. Both Colossians 2:19 and Ephesians 4:15–16 state, “the head, from whom the whole body ... grows”.

The standard Septuagint Greek Old Testament almost always (226 of 239) translates literal instances of the Hebrew word “head” with the Greek word for “head.” Of the 171 times the Hebrew word for “head” meant “leader,” however, they used the Greek word for “head” only once clearly as a metaphor meaning “leader.”³

Renehan, *Greek Lexicographical Notes: A Critical Supplement to the Greek-English Lexicon of Liddell-Scott-Jones* (Hypomnemata 45; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975) 120.

² Marcus Barth, *Ephesians* (2 vols.; AB; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974) 1:184; Gregory W. Dawes, *The Body in Question: Meaning and Metaphor in the Interpretation of Ephesians 5:21–33* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 147, argues that “head” in 4:15 is a live metaphor for “source of the body’s life and growth.”

³ Isa 7:9b, “the head of Samaria [is] the son of Remalia.” H. B. Swete, *An Introduction to the Old Testament in Greek* (NY: KTAV, 1968) 299, “The book of Isaiah shows obvious signs of incompetence”, 324, “in Isaiah, ... Greek with little regard for ... the requirements of the Greek tongue.” In each of the other alleged instances, the standard LXX text either did not translate “head” κεφαλή, or κεφαλή is not used clearly as a metaphor meaning “leader.” Rahlfs, *Septuaginta* 1:646 identifies 3 Kgd (1 Kgs) 8:1 (“the tops κεφαλᾶς of the staffs”) and 2:574 identifies Isa 7:8a “The head of Damascus [is] Rasim” as not in the LXX but added by Origen in the third century AD. Isa 7:8–9 uses κεφαλή twice to mean “capital city,” but cities are not leaders, nor do they have authority. The LXX explains four reference to “head-tail” idioms, which could hardly be translated without κεφαλή, to mean things other than “leader”: “above and below” (Deut 28:13), “high and low” (Deut 28:43–44), “great and small” (Isa 9:13) or “beginning and end” (Isa 19:15). “Head” ≠ “leader” in Isa 9:13 since v. 14 explains “head” to be “the old man and flatterers” and “the tail” “the lying prophets.” Four times the standard LXX translation has εἰς κεφαλήν. The four are: Judg 11:11; 2 Kgdms (= 2 Sam) 22:44; Ps 17:44 = 18:44 in Hebrew = 18:43 in English; Lam 1:5. The only English equivalent BDAG lists for εἰς that fits these contexts naturally is “as” head. The other English equivalents are: into, in, toward, to, at, until, on, for, throughout, up to, in order to, with respect to, with reference to, by, with, in the face of. Dana-Mantey, *Manual Grammar*, 103, cites εἰς meaning “as, expressing equivalence.” Nigel Turner, *Syntax*, 247 cites εἰς meaning “as like normal Greek *hōs*.” BDAG and BAG cite various instances where εἰς means “as.” Artemidorus uses εἰς 6 times in *Onir.* 1.2.6–10 to identify the meaning of elements in dreams, such as “the head indicates one’s father” οἶον κεφαλή εἰς πατέρα. Grudem, *RBMW* 455, correctly identifies these instances as not metaphors, yet his *Evangelical Feminism* (henceforth *EF*) 545–46 alleges 8 εἰς κεφαλήν in the LXX as metaphors for “authority over/ruler,” these 4 + Deut 28:13 (see n. 2); Judg 10:18; 11:8, 9. Judges in the older B and ⚭ (10:18; its text ends at 11:2) have “ruler” (ἄρχοντα accus. of ἄρχων) not “head” (κεφαλή). Readers likely understood them as similes “as head,” not metaphors, “is head.”

This is in spite of the strong LXX tendency for “Greek words to extend their range of meaning in an un-Greek way after the Hebrew word they render.”⁴ This proves that Greek dictionaries are correct that “leader” was not an established metaphorical meaning of “head” in Greek up to the time of the New Testament. If “head” naturally conveyed “leader” in Greek like it does in English, there would be far more. Contrast the similarly literal NASB. It translates 115 of these 171 “head,” since “head” is a common metaphor for “leader” in English.

* Paul never clearly teaches male headship, but he clearly teaches, again and again, leadership in the church and in the home by women. Seven of the ten people Paul names as colleagues in ministry in Romans 16 are women: Phoebe, “deacon of the church of Cenchrea” (Rom 16:1) and “leader⁵ of many, including myself” (Rom 16:2); Junia, “outstanding among the apostles”⁶ (Rom 16:7), Prisca, “my fellow worker in Christ Jesus” (Rom 16:3; cf. Phil 4:3), and Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis “worked hard in the Lord” (Rom 16:6, 12). Chrysostom, the Archbishop of Constantinople in the 300s wrote, “How can it be that yet another woman is honored and proclaimed victorious! We men are put to shame yet again. Or rather, ... it is an honor to have such women as these among us, though we are put to shame in that we are left so far behind them... Mary worked hard among them, because along with teaching she performed other ministries besides. ... The women of those days were more spirited than lions, sharing with the apostles their labors for the gospel’s sake.⁷ ... Notice how noble were the women Paul named. They were in no way hindered by their sex from following the path of virtue, and this is only to be expected. For in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female.”⁸ Of Junia he wrote, “Even to be an apostle is great, but also to be prominent among them—consider how wonderful a song of honor that is. Glory be! How great the wisdom of this woman that she was even deemed worthy of the apostle’s title.”⁹ Bishop Theodoret of Cyrus identified Junia as a woman “of note, not among the pupils but among the teachers, and not among the ordinary teachers but among the apostles.”¹⁰

Why is this important? Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 12:28, 31, “God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers... Earnestly desire the higher gifts.” Since the NT and church fathers affirm women as apostle, prophet, and teacher, then we must conclude that women are not excluded from the highest offices in the church.

⁴ Peter Walters, *The Text of the Septuagint*, 143. Emanuel Tov, *The Text-Critical Use of the Septuagint* (2nd ed.; Jerusalem: Simor, 1997) 83 “many such renderings transfer meanings of Hebrew word[s] ... without regard to Greek idiom. ... Hebraisms have been recognized in the LXX from the early days of the critical study of the Greek Bible... bibliography on this ... is very extensive.

⁵ Every related NT word refers to leadership; cf. Payne, *Man and Woman*, 62–63.

⁶ See especially Eldon J. Epp, *Junia: The First Woman Apostle* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2005) 110–21, and Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 165–186.

⁷ *Homilies on Romans* 31. NPNF 1 11:554. Cited from ACCS 6:371–72.

⁸ *Homilies on Romans* 30. NPNF 1 11:550. Cited from ACCS 6:371.

⁹ Chrysostom, *In ep. ad Romanos* 31, 2 (PG 60:669–70). Translation from Epp, *Junia*, 79.

¹⁰ *Interpretation of the Letter to the Romans*. PG 82 col. 220. Cited from ACCS 6:372.

* Reason 2. Ephesians 5 teaches, “Wives submit to your husbands.”

Actually, Ephesians 5 teaches all believers to submit “one to another out of reverence for Christ, wives to your husbands as to the Lord...” Jerome, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen confirm that the wife’s submission is one facet of mutual submission. Christ is the model for all believers in this very chapter (4:13, 32–5:2) and the preceding chapter. Paul defines what he means by “head” in 5:23 by equating it with “savior” through emphatic apposition: “Christ head of the church, he savior of the body.” What does Christ do as “savior”? Paul explains: He gives himself for the church (5:25), loves, nourishes and cherishes it (5:29). These are exactly what Paul calls husbands to do to their wives as “head,” not to have authority over them! Paul also treats husbands and wives equally in relation to their children in the next chapter (Eph 6:1–2; Col 3:20) and tells wives to “rule their homes,” literally “be house despots” in 1 Timothy 5:14). If this isn’t leadership in the home, what is?

* Paul’s most detailed treatment of marriage, 1 Corinthians 7, identifies exactly the same rights and responsibilities for wives and husbands regarding twelve different issues about marriage, both natural and spiritual (vv. 2, 3, 4, 5, 10–11, 12–13, 14, 15, 16, 28, 32 and 34b, and 33–34a and 34c). In each he addresses men and women as equals. His wording is symmetrically balanced to emphasize this equality. Paul affirms that husband and wife mutually possess each another (v. 2). They have mutual conjugal rights (3). Paul even writes (1 Cor 7:4), “the husband does not have authority over his own body, but his wife does.” They have mutual sexual obligations (5). He tells both not to divorce (10–13). Both set apart the other and their children with the spiritual privilege of experiencing the gospel lived out (14). Both have freedom to remarry if deserted (15). Both have a potentially saving influence on the other (16). Both have a choice in marriage (28). Both should please the other (33–34a) and Christ (32, 34b). Richard Hays correctly observes how revolutionary this was, “Paul offers a paradigm-shattering vision of marriage as a relationship in which the partners are bonded together in submission to one another.”¹¹

* Reason 3. 1 Timothy 2:12 prohibits women from teaching or having authority over men.

A careful analysis of 1 Timothy 2:12 shows that this verse simply prohibits women in first century Ephesus during a crisis of false teaching from seizing authority to teach men. It does not prohibit women from teaching men as long as they have recognized teaching authority, like Priscilla did. I repeat, 1 Timothy 2:12 simply prohibits women in first century Ephesus during a crisis of false teaching from seizing authority to teach men. It does not prohibit women from teaching men as long as they have recognized teaching authority, like Priscilla did.

The old NIV reads: “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man.” This translation is doubtful for four reasons.

First, the key Greek verb here is best translated “to assume authority one does not rightfully have.” Its first documented occurrence clearly meaning “exercise authority” is three centuries after Paul wrote 1

¹¹ Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Louisville, Ky.: John Knox, 1997), 131..

Timothy.¹² If it always meant “have authority,” Chrysostom wrote “do not have authority over your wife”!¹³ In Paul’s day it could mean either “to dominate” or, more commonly, “to assume authority.” Every time it means “assume authority,” the authority is seized, not rightfully held. Chrysostom states: “‘I am not permitting a woman ... to assume authority over a man.’ Just why? [Because Eve] assumed authority [ἡὐθένησεν] once wickedly.”¹⁴ The King James translation, “to usurp authority,” reflects this understanding. The standard New Testament Dictionary defines it “to assume a stance of independent authority.” In contrast, every clear reference to “exercise authority” in the New Testament is based on a completely different word. The NIV 2011 correctly translates it, “to assume authority.” Even Baldwin’s study of this word in the major complementarian book on this passage does not include “to exercise authority” or “to have authority” in the range of meanings it carried in Paul’s day.

Second, Paul typically uses the conjunction in this verse to join two elements to convey a single idea.¹⁵ In this case, it joins “to teach” and “to assume authority.” Consequently, Paul does not prohibit two things: teaching and seizing authority over men. He prohibits one thing: women seizing authority to teach men, just as Origen explained it.¹⁶ Origen in this context affirms many women teachers with proper authority, including Priscilla, Maximilla, the four daughters of Philip, Deborah, Miriam, Hulda, and Anna. Did Paul silence only women? No! Chapter 1 similarly silenced false teachers who had seized authority to teach (1:3).

Third, the translation “I do not permit” is doubtful because the verb Paul chose normally refers to something limited in time, not permanent. Furthermore, its grammatical form is rarely used for a permanent prohibition, but usually focuses on a presently ongoing permission or prohibition, so is best translated, “I am not permitting.”

Fourth, if this verse is a permanent prohibition of women teaching or having authority over a man, it contradicts the Bible’s affirmations of women teaching. * Acts 18:26 states that “Priscilla and Aquila ... explained to [the eloquent preacher Apollos] the way of God more accurately.” Paul lists Priscilla’s name before her husband’s, contrary to Greek custom, giving her prominence in explaining the way of God. She did this in the very city this restriction on teaching addresses and was probably there when Paul wrote 1 Timothy since Paul greets her in 2 Timothy 4:19). Phoebe must have also taught adult men since she delivered Romans as Paul’s emissary (16:1) and so naturally answered the Romans’ questions about it. Acts 21:8–9 says, “Philip ... had four daughters who prophesied”

¹² Circa AD 370 Saint Basil, *The Letters* 69, line 45: “he [the bishop of Rome] may himself exercise full authority [αὐθεντησαί] in this matter, selecting men capable of enduring the hardships of a journey.” Roy J. Deferrari, trans., *Saint Basil* 2:40–43 (LCL).

¹³ *Hom. in ep. ad Col.* 10.1 (11.396C).

¹⁴ Chrysostom, *In Genesium* (Sermons) ser. 1–9, PG 54:595.1.

¹⁵ Philip B. Payne, “1 Tim 2.12 and the Use of οὐδέ to Combine Two Elements to Express a Single Idea,” *NTS* 54 (2008): 235–53 examines every use of οὐδέ in Paul’s letters.

¹⁶ Jenkins, “Origen on 1 Corinthians. IV,” 42, “concerning woman not becoming a ruler over man in speaking” (περὶ τοῦ μὴ τὴν γυναῖκα ἡγεμόνα γίνεσθαι τῷ λόγῳ τοῦ ἀνδρός).

Elsewhere, Paul encouraged women to teach in church. 1 Cor 11:5 gives rules for “every woman who prays or prophesies...” * 1 Cor 14:5, 24, 31, 39 states 4 times, “I would like every one of you to ...prophesy.” 14:26 states, “whenever you come together, each one has a ... teaching (*didakē*)....” * Likewise, Colossians 3:16 (cf. v. 11) encourages all believers, “teach and admonish one another with all wisdom.” Paul commands older women in Titus 2:3 to “be teachers of what is excellent.” Paul’s guide for Christian discipleship states, “entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach (*διδασκαλοῦ*) others” (2 Tim 2:2).

* Paul writes that Lois and Eunice taught Timothy. He affirms “your faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice ... from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures” (2 Tim 1:5; 3:14-16). Hebrews states, “brothers and sisters, ... by this time you ought to be teachers” (3:1, 12; 5:12).

* God even revealed key portions of inspired scripture through women.¹⁷ The first human prophecy in the New Testament was when “Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud voice, ‘Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. ... the mother of my Lord’” (Luke 1:41–43). The second is Mary’s Magnificat (Luke 1:46–55), which is also was the first Christian exposition of Scripture. All these passages show the error of interpreting 1 Tim 2:12 as a permanent prohibition against women teaching.

* Reason 4. The “Creation Order” establishes man’s priority over woman.

God created the plants and animals before man, yet to whom did God give dominion? Was it not the one created later? In fact, the leadership of the one born later is a major Old Testament theme: Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, Judah over his older brothers, Moses over Aaron, David over his seven older brothers, Solomon over his nine older brothers, and so on.

Genesis teaches that God created man and woman equally in his image and that both man and woman together have dominion over the earth.

* Reason 5. God calls woman man’s “helper” in Genesis 2:18 and 20, so women must be subordinate to men.

What God says is, “I will make a strength corresponding to him”. The first word of this expression, sometimes translated “helper,” (NIV 2011) means “strength, help, savior, or rescuer.” Sixteen times it describes God as the rescuer of people in need, their strength or power (Exod 18:4; Deut 33:7, 26, 29; Ps 20:3; 33:20 [19 English]; 70:6; 89:20; 115:9, 10, 11; 121:1, 2; 124:8; 146:5; Hos 13:9); the remaining three times (Isa 30:5; Dan 11:34; Ezek 12:14) it describes a military protector. It never implies subordination. * It means literally, “a strength as in front of him,” namely, “a strength corresponding to him.”

* Reason 6. Man ought to rule over woman since God decreed, “He will rule over you” in Genesis 3:16.

This is God’s statement of what will result from the fall. Like every other result of the fall, this is something new, not in the original creation. Even leading complementarians agree that this “is not a prescription

¹⁷ such as Exodus 15:21; Judges 5:2–31; 1 Samuel 2:1–10; 25:24–31; and Luke 1:25, 42–45, 46–55.

of what should be.”¹⁸ They fail to acknowledge, however, that the word for “rule” here does not imply bad rule. Both major Hebrew dictionaries (*HALOT* 2:647–48 and *BDB* 605) analyze every Old Testament instance of this word and list no negative meaning for it. This word is even used for God’s rule.

* Since man’s ruling over woman is a result of the fall, man must not have ruled over woman before the fall. Furthermore, Christ, the promised seed of the woman, has overcome the fall (Gen 3:15; 1 Cor 15:45). New creatures freed by Christ should not foster any of the tragic consequences the fall introduced, including man ruling over woman.

* Reason 7. The Old Testament pattern of male leadership shows that God approves only male leaders.

The OT describes many women in leadership with God’s blessing. It never states that being female should disqualify them. The prophetess Miriam is sent by God “to lead” Israel (Micah 6:4). Deborah is one of the judges whom “the LORD raised up” and who “saved Israel from the hands of their enemies” (Judg 2:16, 18; 4:10, 14, 24; 5:1–31). She was a prophetess and the highest leader in all Israel in her day (4:4–5). She, a wife and mother (5:7), had authority to command Israel’s military commander, Barak, “Go!” (4:6, 14) and he went. They worked together well with shared authority, he as military commander, she as commander in chief.

Queen Esther had sufficient influence to save her people from imminent genocide. She, along with Mordecai, “wrote with full authority,” and “Esther’s decree confirmed these regulations” (9:29–32). The Bible praises the Queen of Sheba (1 Kgs 10:1–13; 2 Chron 9:1–12) and the Queen of Chaldea (Dan 5:10–12). The Hebrew word for “queen” is simply “king” with a feminine ending. The Bible only praises and never criticizes only three people with this title: the three women just cited. Although queens Jezebel and Athaliah were wicked (1 Kgs 18:4), like most of Israel’s kings, the Bible does not criticize them or any other woman on the grounds that women should not have authority over men.

* Priests consulted the prophetess Huldah on finding the lost book of the Law. (2 Kgs 22:14–23:3; 2 Chr 34:22–32). They obeyed her. This sparked what is probably the greatest revival in the history of Israel (2 Kgs 22:14–23:25; 2 Chr 34:29–35:19).

Moses said, “Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, that the Lord would put His spirit on them!” (Num 11:29). Joel predicted a greater prophetic role for women: “I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. ... Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:28–29; Acts 2:14–21)

* Reason 8. In the Old Testament, God approves only male priests.

The most obvious reason for this is the association of priestesses in pagan religions with prostitution, which Deuteronomy 23:17 prohibits. Yet God commanded Moses to call all the children of Israel to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” in Exodus 19:6). Isaiah 61:6 predicts a future when all God’s people “will

¹⁸ John Piper and Wayne Grudem, “Charity, Clarity, and Hope: The Controversy and the Cause of Christ,” pages 403–22 in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood: A Response to Evangelical Feminism* (ed. John Piper and Wayne Grudem; Wheaton: Crossway, 1991), 409.

be called priests of the LORD, you will be named ministers of our God.”

* Reason 9. There were no women apostles, so there should be no women in church leadership.

Jesus didn't appoint any Gentile or slave as a member of the twelve. Does that mean these should be excluded from church leadership? Jesus' appointment of twelve Jewish men paralleled the twelve sons of Israel and reinforced the symbolism of the church as the “new Israel.”

Jesus must not have wanted only male disciples because he encouraged women as disciples.¹⁹ When Mary “sat at the Lord's feet listening,” the posture and position of a disciple, Jesus affirms her, “Mary has chosen the better part, and it will not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:38–42). Furthermore, Jesus did not limit the proclamation of the gospel to men. Mary Magdalene was the first person the resurrected Christ sought out and commissioned to (John 20:14–18):

Go instead to my brothers and tell them, “I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”

She went to the disciples with the news: “I have seen the Lord!” And she told them that he had said these things to her” (NIV 2011).

Furthermore, Paul identifies Junia as “outstanding among the apostles” (Rom 16:7). This group included James (Gal 1:19) and Paul, who were both more influential than any of the twelve. Therefore, Jesus' choice of twelve male apostles clearly does not exclude women from leadership in the church.

* Reason 10. Women must not be elders, overseers, or pastors of local churches, because the Bible only identifies men, never women, in these offices.

In fact, however, apart from Christ (Heb 13:20; 1 Pet 2:25; 5:4), the New Testament does not name anyone, man or woman, as an overseer (*episkopos*) or pastor (*poimēn*). * The Bible does give John (2 John 1 and 3 John 1) and Peter (2 Pet 5:1) special titles containing the word “elder,” but they refer to their special status as apostolic eyewitnesses. They do not identify them as having a local church office.

* The only New Testament person named with an explicit title of local church leadership is not a man at all, but a woman: “Phoebe deacon of the church in Cenchrea,” in Rom 16:1. The same title was used for a pagan religious office and could apply to women. e.g. *CIG* II: 3037. This is not the Greek word for deaconess, (*diakonissa*).²⁰ Cranfield argues it is “virtually certain that Phoebe is being described as ‘a (or possibly ‘the’) deacon’ of the church.”²¹ Calvin says she had “a public office in the Church.”²²

* Paul encourages all believers to desire the office of overseer by stating “Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task” (NIV 2011). * The subject of both Paul's lists of qualifications for overseers and

¹⁹ E.g. John 4:14–26; 11:25–26.

²⁰ 384–322 BC Demosthenes, 24 (*Against Timocrates*), 197; v/iv BC Aristophanes, *Ecclesiazusae* 1116.

²¹ C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans* (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1979) 2:781.

²² John Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries, Romans* (Wilmington, Del.: Associated Publishers & Authors, n.d.) 1522.

elders in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 is “anyone.” There is not a single masculine pronoun or any other limitation to men in either list, contrary to most English translations.

* Some think that “man of one woman” in 1 Timothy 3:2, 12 and Titus 1:6 excludes women, but even prominent complementarians Doug Moo and Thomas Schreiner acknowledge this phrase does not exclude women.²³ It is a requirement that overseers be “monogamous,” whether men or women. As Gordon Hugenberger has shown,²⁴ and Jesus’ interpretation of Deuteronomy 24 in Mark 10:12 confirms, it is common throughout the Bible for prohibitions addressing men also to apply to women. For example, “Do not covet your neighbor’s wife” implicitly also prohibits coveting your neighbor’s husband.

Paul’s point is not that all overseers must be married. Paul, after all, encourages single believers not to marry but to be devoted to the Lord in 1 Corinthians 7:27–28, 32–35. Furthermore, to demand that overseers be married would exclude Jesus, Paul (1 Cor 7:7), and virtually all Catholic priests as well as monastics, both male and female.

One should not isolate a single word (“man”) from an idiomatic phrase (“man of one woman”) and elevate that single word to the status of a separate universal requirement. It is like taking “household” out of “ruling children and their own households well” and insisting that only slave owners can be overseers.

Furthermore, since Phoebe was a deacon (Rom 16:2) and the qualifications for women are included under deacons (1 Tim 3:11),²⁵ “man of one woman” in the very next verse of this section must not exclude women.

Reason 11. 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 commands three times, “Let women be silent in the churches.”

²³ Douglas J. Moo, “The Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11–15: A Rejoinder,” *Trinity Journal* 2 NS (1981): 211; Thomas R. Schreiner, “Philip Payne on Familiar Ground: A Review of Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul’s Letters*” *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* (Spring 2010): 33–46, 35.

²⁴ G. H. Hugenberger, “Women in Church Office: Hermeneutics or Exegesis? A Survey of Approaches to 1 Timothy 2:8–15” *JETS* 35/3 (1992): 341–60, 360 note 78.

²⁵ Köstenberger, Schreiner, Hurley, and Clark understand 1 Tim 3:11 to refer to women deacons. Andreas J. Köstenberger, “Women in the Pauline Mission,” in *The Gospel to the Nations: Perspectives on Paul’s Mission* (ed. Peter Bolt and Mark Thompson; Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 229, and Köstenberger’s review of Belleville’s *Women Leaders and the Church: Three Crucial Questions*,” *JETS* 44 (2001): 345. Thomas R. Schreiner, “The Valuable Ministries of Women in the Context of Male Leadership: A Survey of Old and New Testament Examples and Teaching,” *RBMW* 209–24, 214. Hurley, *Man and Woman*, 229–231 argues cogently that 1 Tim 3:11 addresses women deacons. Clark, *Man*, 119–23. On April 13, 2005 in Blanchard Hall at Wheaton College Wayne Grudem affirmed that women can be deacons and that Phoebe was a deacon. This was affirmed by Theodoret 3.656, Theodore of Mopsuestia 2.128, and the third century *Didascalia apostolorum* 3.12, and has been widely held throughout church history. Cf. the list of advocates of this view in Marshall, *Pastoral Epistles*, 493 n. 82.

This is the only passage in the Bible that silences women, but there is compelling evidence these verses were not in Paul's original letter but were added in the margin later. Enough that Joseph Fitzmyer writes, 'the majority of commentators today' regard 34–5 as a later addition.²⁶ Kim Haines-Eitzen affirms this of 'Nearly all scholars now'.²⁷

* The following may appear challenging as your first introduction to analysis of Greek manuscripts, but the logic is straightforward, so listen carefully and I think you will get it. Manuscript evidence makes a strong case that these two verses were originally written in the margin. * The oldest surviving Bible in Greek marks the silencing of women as a later addition. * The fundamental principle for determining the original text of Scripture is known as Bengel's first principle. It states, "The text that best explains the emergence of all other texts is most likely original." These verses follow verse 40 in "Western" Greek manuscripts, but in other manuscripts they follow verse 33. * There are only three logical possibilities for their original location: after v. 33, after v. 40, or in the margin.

* There is not a single passage of comparable length in any manuscript of any of Paul's letters that has been moved this far without an obvious reason, and no such reason has ever been found for this transposition. The transposition of this text from a position either after v. 33 or 40 to the other is inexplicable based on scribal convention. However, as Ulrich Schmid has shown, it was scribal custom to write omitted text in the margin and for scribes to copy text they found in the margin into the body text, just like any secretary retyping an edited letter will move marginal notes into the body of the letter. For example, 17 of 20 instances of readable ancient text in the margin of Matthew in the oldest Greek Bible are in the body text of virtually all later manuscripts.

Common sense demands that something customary is more likely to occur than something so extraordinary that no other instance is known. Thus, verses 34–35 must have originally been added in the margin. Copyists inserted it either after verse 33 or 40, the former giving rise to its traditional location, the latter gave rise to the "Western" reading.

* The meaning of marginal text is not constrained by its context. So we cannot know if this text in the margin is something Paul affirms or the false prophecy Paul decries in the adjacent body text. A typical papyrus margin does not have room for this much text in Paul's large handwriting (Gal 6:11; 2 Thess 3:17). One can only conjecture who wrote it in the margin, why, and when. Its origin as marginal text is the only natural explanation of the manuscript evidence. This is a unique case. It does not undermine the reliability or suggest the marginal status of any other passage of Scripture.

If Paul authorized his secretary to put this text in the margin, it would probably be to identify the content of the false prophecy implied in his following statement, "if anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him know that what I tell you is the Lord's command." * To interpret this prohibition of women speaking in church as Paul's command would contradict Paul's affirmations throughout this chapter that "all" may teach and prophesy (5, 24, 26, 31, 39) and his affirmations of women prophesying in chapter 11:5–6. * It would also

²⁶ J. Fitzmyer, *First Corinthians* (AB; New Haven: Yale, 2008) 530, citing besides himself, Cope, Delling, Fuller, Keck, and Roetzel.

²⁷ Haines-Eitzen, *Palimpsest*, 62.

contradict Psalm 68:11 (12 MT), “The Lord announced the word; the women proclaiming it are a great company.” The recently devised attempt to limit the prohibition only to women judging prophecies is contrary to its plain meaning. The permission of any kind of speech except judging prophecies permits speech specifically prohibited in verse 35, the asking of questions out of a desire to learn! “If they want to learn, let them ask their own husbands at home, for it is a disgrace for a woman to speak in church.”

* Reason 12. Men and women have separate roles in the church.

Not only does Scripture nowhere clearly exclude women from leadership roles over men in the church, Paul explicitly expresses the equal standing of male and female in Christ.

First Corinthians 11:11 states, “However, neither is woman separate from man, nor is man separate from woman in the Lord.” Standard Greek dictionaries do not support the translation “independent” regarding persons. Paul states that woman and man are not separate in the context of affirming that women, like men, may pray and prophesy, leading worship in church. Therefore, Paul’s denial that women are separate from men “in the Lord” must apply to women in church leadership. Paul introduces this 11:11 with a word “however,” that in Greek highlights his point of central concern.²⁸ Therefore, Paul is stating a principle of central concern regarding public worship: there is no gender-based separation in church leadership.

* Galatians 2–3 also explicitly affirms this fundamental principle. When Peter withdrew from table fellowship with Gentiles in Galatia, Paul “opposed him to his face, [for] not acting in line with the truth of the gospel” (Galatians 2:11–14 NIV). In defending his denunciation of Peter’s unequal treatment, Paul asserts the principle of the equal standing of Jew and Gentile in Christ and expands it to include slave and free and male and female in Galatians 3:28. Therefore, this verse in context teaches that any exclusion of Gentiles, slaves, or women as a class from full participation in church is contrary to the gospel. This verse is a call to radically new social interaction based on equality in the body of Christ, the church. It states that in Christ there is no male-female division.

* Let’s recap what the Bible really teaches on these twelve issues:

1. Men and women should share leadership. Leadership is not exclusively male.
2. Men and women should “submit to one another” in the church and in marriage.
3. Women may teach in church.
- * 4. Men and women share dominion in Creation.
5. Woman is a “strength corresponding to” man, not his subordinate.
6. Male rule is a result of the fall.
- * 7. The Old Testament approves women in leadership.
8. The biblical ideal is that all believers should be priests and should prophesy.
9. There were women leaders in the apostolic church.
- * 10. The Bible does not exclude women from local church offices. In fact, the only person the Bible

²⁸ A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1934), 1187.

explicitly names with the title of a local church office is Phoebe.

11. The Bible encourages women to speak, even prophesy, in church.

12. The Bible teaches that the exclusion of women from leadership roles is contrary to the gospel.

* The problem with these twelve allegedly biblical reasons for exclusively male leadership is not just that none of the texts to which they appeal actually teach that women should not exercise authority over men in the church. Their crucial problem is that so many foundational principles of the Bible directly oppose such an exclusion of women, including each the following seventeen theological axioms from Paul that man and woman are equally:

created in God's image,
given dominion over the earth,
given the creation blessing,
given the creation mandate,
and are equally in Christ.

* Man/woman equality is also entailed in:

mutual submission in the marriage,
the oneness of Christ's body,
the priesthood of all believers,
liberty in Christ.
the new creation,
and inaugureated eschatology.

* The Spirit gifts all for ministry.

The nature of church leadership as service applies equally to man and woman.

There is no male-female division in Christ.

Male and female are not separate in the Lord

God shows no favoritism.

* I set out 44 years ago to prove that the Bible limits the ministry of women. My study of the text of the Bible itself forced me to abandon the complementarian idea that women must not teach or have authority over men in the church. The Bible nowhere clearly teaches this. Instead, it clearly affirms the equal standing of man and woman in church and in marriage and repudiates male-female division in the church as contrary to the gospel. Paul, in fact, is the best-documented advocate of the equality of man and woman from the entire ancient Greek world.

The Bible provides a solid foundation for affirming women and gender studies. Therefore, women and gender studies should be important to a Christian University. Indeed, a Christian University is uniquely well qualified to foster women's and gender studies. May the Lord bless you as you live in the light of God's freeing Word.

practical advice: Men, be careful not to interrupt women, but instead respond to them in ways that encourage future interaction. Women, work with men so that that the next time that man is in a leadership position he will want to work with a woman because of his experience with you.