

Does the Bible Teach Patriarchy? 11 Alleged Biblical Teachings

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1. The Bible teaches “male headship.”

- Unlike English “head,” Greek *kephalē* did not normally convey “leader” (117–37). *Liddell Scott Jones*, the standard Greek dictionary, lists 48 translations of *kephalē* as a metaphor, but none means anything like “leader.” “Source,” however, was a standard meaning of *kephalē* (121–28).
- Of 171 passages where “head” means “leader” in Hebrew, the LXX translates only **one** *kephalē* clearly as a metaphor for “leader,” Isaiah 7:9b (4 similes “as head” *eis kephalēn*); P. B. Payne “What About Headship” in *Mutual by Design* (CBE, 2017) 141–61, 226–231, at 50, 229–31.
- 7 of the 10 people Paul commends in Romans 16 as active in ministry are women (61–68).

2. The Bible teaches, “Wives submit to your own husbands,” in Ephesians 5 (271–90).

- Grammatically, this is one facet of *mutual* submission, voluntarily yielding in love (5:21–22).
- Paul defines “head” in 5:23 as “savior” by apposition. As “savior” “Christ gives himself” for the church (5:25) and “nourishes and cherishes” it (5:29). “head” = “source of love and nourishment”
- By far Paul’s longest treatment of marriage, 1 Corinthians 7, treats wives and husbands equally regarding 12 distinct marriage issues, both physical & spiritual. Note reciprocal wording (105–8).

3. The Bible prohibits women from teaching or having authority over a man in 1 Timothy 2:12.

- “I am not permitting” normally refers to something limited in time, not permanent (319–35).
- *Authentein* means “to assume authority that is not rightfully held” (361–97, BDAG, NIV 2011).
- In Paul’s letters, *oude* usually joins two elements to convey a single idea (337–59).
∴ 1 Timothy 2:12 gives not 2 prohibitions, but 1: “to assume authority to teach a man” (337–59).
- Paul let women teach in church: 1 Corinthians 14:26; Colossians 3:16; cf. Acts 18:26 (328–34).

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

- Genesis makes no distinction in the image of God or dominion between man and woman (41–54).

5. God calls woman man’s “helper” in Genesis 3:20, so women must be subordinate to men.

- “Helper” means “strength, help, savior, or rescuer” corresponding to him, “as in front of him.” It never refers to an inferior. 16 times God is the help, 3 times a military protector is the help (Isaiah 30:5; Daniel 11:34; Hosea 13:9). This OT word never implies subordination (44–45).

6. Man ought to rule over woman since God decreed, “He will rule over you” Genesis 3:16 (49–51).

- *HALOT* 2:647–48 & *BDB* 605 analyze every OT use of “rule” and list no negative meaning for it. Like every result of the fall, man’s rule over woman is new and contrary to the original creation.

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

- The OT praises many women God approved in leadership, e.g. Miriam, Deborah, Huldah (55–57).

8. God approves only male priests in the Old Testament. (57)

- The OT ideal: Israel was to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 61:6.

9. There were no women apostles, so there should be no women in church leadership. (59)

- The same logic would exclude all Gentiles and slaves. Jesus encouraged women as disciples.
- The resurrected Christ first commissioned Mary Magdalene to announce this (John 20:14–18).
- Junia was “outstanding among the apostles” Romans 16:7 (65–67)

10. The Bible names no women “overseer, pastor or elder,” so women should not have these offices.

- Apart from **Christ** (Hebrews 13:20; 1 Peter 2:25; 5:4), the New Testament does not name anyone, man or woman, as an **overseer** (*episkopos*) or **pastor** (*poimēn*).
- John’s unique title “**the elder**” (2 John 1; 3 John 1) and Peter’s title “**fellow-elder, a witness of Christ’s sufferings**” (2 Peter 5:1) highlights their special status as apostolic eyewitnesses, not their being local church officials. The NT names only one person with the title of a local church office, “Phoebe, deacon of the church in Cenchreae” (Romans 16:1; 61–63; Cranfield, *Romans*).
- Paul encourages “anyone” to aspire the office of overseer/elder in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.
- There are no masculine pronouns or any limitation to men in 1 Timothy 3 or Titus 1. “Man of one woman” excludes polygamists, not women or single men, such as Christ and Paul (445–54).
- ∴ One should not extract “man” from “man of one woman” to create a separate new requirement.

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

1 Corinthians 14:34–35 is after v. 40 in “Western” manuscripts but after v. 33 elsewhere. There are only 3 reasonable possibilities for vv. 34–35’s original location: after v. 33, after 40, or in the margin. No other block of text this large occurs in locations this far apart in any manuscript of any of Paul’s letters without an obvious reason. No reason adequately explains why a scribe would transpose vv. 34–35 to follow 40 or the reverse. This would be a major breach of scribal duty. It was scribal custom, however, to write omitted text in the margin and to insert marginal text into the body text when copying manuscripts. Common sense demands that something customary is more likely to occur than something so extraordinary that no other instance is known. Transcriptional probability argues that someone first wrote vv. 34–35 in the margin of a manuscript, and later copyists inserted it either after v. 33 or after v. 40 (227–32). There is not enough room in the margin at this point in 1 Corinthians for this much text in Paul’s large handwriting (Galatians 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:17). The oldest Greek Bible, *Vaticanus*, and Bishop Victor of Capua in one of the oldest in Latin, *Fuldensis*, mark it as a later addition. It is a **unique** case, so it does not support the marginal status or exclusion of any other verses.

1 Corinthians 11:11 teaches, “However, neither is woman separate [standard Greek dictionaries do not support “independent” regarding people] from man, nor is man separate from woman in the Lord” in the context of affirming that women, like men, may pray and prophesy, leading church worship. “However” in Greek implies the point of central concern: there is no gender-based separation in church leadership.

When Peter withdrew from table fellowship with Gentiles, Paul “opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned ...[of] hypocrisy ... [against] the gospel” (Galatians 2:11–14). In defending this, Paul explicitly expands the principle of the equal standing of Jew and Gentile to include slave and free and male and female in Galatians 3:28. Any exclusion of Gentiles, slaves, or women as a class from full participation in the church is contrary to the gospel. Galatians 3:28 calls for radically new social interaction based on equal standing in the body of Christ, the church (79–104). We know Peter repented of this since 2 Peter 3:15–16 praises “all Paul’s letters,” which always included Galatians, as “Scripture.” All who restrict women’s roles should, like Peter, repent of making such a division in Christ. Galatians 3:28 renounces the early Jewish prayer thanking God that he is not a heathen, a bondman, or a woman. All three categories are social, so denying that Galatians 3:28 has social implications cannot be true.

The Bible teaches that the Spirit gifts **all** for ministry, making no distinction between men and woman.

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