

Does the Bible Oppose Women in Leadership?

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* = click Power Point button 8-point text = words not spoken

note: this uses the TranslitLSU font

6673 words (not including notes and small print not to read) 40 minutes to read aloud

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Early in my Ph.D. studies at the University of Cambridge a lecturer said, “No passage in the New Testament properly understood in its original context limits the ministry of women.” I almost stood up and shouted, “**That’s not true!**” I tried to disprove him but learned that **I** had been wrong. This talk distills my last 50 years of research that changed my mind regarding **seven** key objections to women in leadership. After I discuss each objection, you may ask questions about it.

* **Objection 1:** The Bible teaches “**male headship**”

In other words, only men should be leaders in the church and the home. This idea is based on English translations of 1 Corinthians 11:3, “**man is the head of woman.**” In English the word “head” often implies *authority over*. But its context shows that Paul meant, “man is the **source** of woman,” referring to Adam as the source from which God formed Eve. Head meaning *source* is commonly listed in Greek dictionaries since the 12th century.ⁱ * *Authority*, however, was **not** an established meaning of *head* in Greek. The most exhaustive Greek dictionary lists forty-nine figurative meanings for this word. None of them conveys *authority*. * Most dictionaries of ancient secular Greek don't cite **any** example of this word meaning *authority*.ⁱⁱ The **earliest** native Greek citation meaning *authority* I have seen in any secular Greek dictionary is from the fourth century AD. Greek dictionaries identify *head* meaning *authority* as Byzantine or medieval, long after Paul wrote. So it's unlikely that Paul intended *head* to convey *authority*.

* Unfortunately, the entry for “head” 9in the standard New Testament Greek Dictionary (BDAG) is chuck full of errors. None of its alleged instances of “head” meaning “superior rank” in secular Greek actually mean “superior rank.” The only authority it cites for “head” **not** meaning

source **affirms** the meaning *source*.

* The Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures widely used in Paul's day **confirms** that *authority* was **not** an established meaning of *head*. It almost **always** translates Hebrew references to a physical head with *head* but almost **never** when *head* means *leader*.

English versions translate most of the 180 cases where the Hebrew word for *head* means "leader" *head*, but the standard Greek version **only once** translates this word clearly as a metaphor meaning "leader."ⁱⁱⁱ * All other **alleged** cases of *head* meaning "leader" were added by Origen in the 3rd century, are explained in context to mean something other than "leader," or are translated "as head,"^{iv} which Greek readers could understand to mean "like a head" rather than "is head."^v * **None** of Paul's 12 *head* metaphors requires the meaning *authority*. **Ten** naturally convey *source*, and the other two, *apex*.^{vi}

* Exclusion of women from church leadership is incompatible with the Bible's **many** affirmations of women leaders. Seven of the ten people Paul names as colleagues in ministry in Romans 16 are women, including **Phoebe**, "deacon of the church of Cenchreae" and "leader"^{vii} of many, including myself" and **Junia**, who, like her husband, was "outstanding among the apostles."^{viii}

In summary: secular Greek dictionaries, the Greek Bible, Paul's use of "head," and Paul's affirmations of women in church leadership show that Paul did not intend "head" to mean "authority." Nowhere does the Bible teaches male headship.^{ix}

*** Objection 2** says that Ephesians 5:22 teaches, "**Wives submit to your own husbands.**"

As virtually all Greek editions show,¹ the earliest manuscripts of verse 22 have no verb *submit*, including \mathfrak{B}^{46} and Codex Vaticanus, nor do its citations by Clement of Alexandria (*Stromata* 4.8.64), Origen, and Theodore of Mopsuestia. Jerome's commentary states that in Greek manuscripts verse 22 never repeats the verb *submit* from verse 21.² The UBS text says it's "almost certain" that *submit* was added later.³ Paul actually wrote, "submitting one to another out of reverence for Christ, wives to your own husbands ..." The wife's submission depends for its verb on "submitting **to one another.**" The reciprocal pronoun requires reciprocating submission. It cannot, therefore, refer to submission to superior rank. Rather "submit" here

¹ NA, UBS, Nestle, Westcott-Hort, Tasker, Souter, Alford, Tischendorf. The inclusion of "submit" in Dirk Jongkind et al., eds., *The Greek New Testament: Tyndale House, Cambridge* (2017) is inconsistent with its aim "to present the New Testament books in the earliest form in which they are well attested" (vii).

² A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 399. Savior title later. absence of article supports "savior."

³ UBS⁴ (1998), 3*; UBS⁵ (2014), 8*.

refers to “submission in the sense of voluntary yielding in love.” * BDAG 1042 Col 3:18 *in all ways that are*

appropriate in the Lord. Titus 2:5 in order that God’s Word not be blasphemed 1 Pet 3:1, 7 so that, even if

some of their husbands do not obey the word, they may be won over without a word by their wives’ conduct...Husbands in the same way [submit yourselves to your own wives], dwelling together wisely, recognizing her as a weaker feminine [BDAG 208, *gynaikeios*, “feminine.”] precious vessel, and assign them the honor they deserve as coheirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that your prayers won’t be hindered.”

The first manuscript with any form of “submit” somewhere in verse 22 was written about AD 360. But after “submit” first appears, every surviving manuscript includes it and none ever removed it. Therefore, it is not plausible that *submit* was removed from **all** the earliest manuscripts.

* In this chapter, Christ is the model for **all** believers in giving himself up for us. The prior chapter explains that Christ as “head” is the **source** of the body’s growth. In verse 23, Paul **explains** what he means by *head* by **equating** it with “savior” through emphatic **apposition**: “Christ **head** of the church, he **savior** of the body.” As “savior” Christ **gave himself** for the church. Christ has authority over the church, but Paul’s point here is that as savior, Christ brought the church into existence. He is its source just as “man is the head-as-source of the woman” in 1 Corinthians 11:3 κεφαλή δὲ γυναικὸς ὁ ἀνὴρ and may well be in this close parallel.

Eph 5:23 ~ ἀνὴρ ἐστὶν κεφαλή τῆς γυναικὸς. As in 1 Cor 11:7 man and woman can be either with an article or without an article, and both be generic: “woman ἡ γυνή is the glory of man ἄνδρός.” Abstract nouns (source) do not require an article to be definite. When referring to a wife, Paul almost always, 19x, uses an article with γυνή. Every other case, the context makes it clear that it refers to a wife (10x). 17 times γυνή without an article refers to “woman”, not “wife”. The word for “women” (*gynē*) in 1 Tim 3:11 can refer to either women or wives, depending on the context. Excluding five ambiguous cases, Paul uses *gynē* twenty-eight times meaning “woman” and twenty-eight times meaning “wife.” Twenty of the twenty-eight meaning “wife” have an article, “the.” Excluding Paul’s two chapters about marriage, 1 Corinthians 7 and Ephesians 5, only six clearly mean “wife.” In each, the context is husband-wife relations.

As 1 Corinthians 11:12 implies, both men and women should respect each other as their source. Respect is a good reason for submission.

* 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. In **each** he addresses husbands and wives as **equals**. His wording is symmetrically balanced to emphasize this equality. Paul even writes in verse 4, “the husband does not have **authority** over his own body, but his wife does.” * Furthermore, 1 Timothy 5:14 tells wives to “rule their homes.”

How important **is** husband-wife mutual submission? My father loved my mother dearly, but he believed that as head of the house he had the final say. After giving special lectures in seminaries throughout Asia, he was determined to climb Mt. Fuji. The weather was miserably cold and raining. Mom pleaded, “Don’t go!” But he went and never returned. After days of searching, the lead climber suffered a cramp. Only because the search party spread out at that location did they discover my father. I helped carry my beloved father’s body down Mt. Fuji. Christians worldwide lost one of their most brilliant biblical scholars because he believed that as head of his wife, he did not have to submit to her. Mutual submission as taught in Ephesians 5, 1 Corinthians 7:4, and 1 Peter 3, would have saved my father from death on Mt. Fuji.

*** Objection 3:** 1 Timothy 2:12 teaches: “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man.” Taking this as a universal prohibition ignores that the **only** people 1 Timothy states the false teachers deceived are women and that this letter addresses a specific **local** problem.^x Furthermore, this translation is doubtful for **four** reasons.

***** First, the Greek word the old NIV translated “to have authority”^{xi} is best translated “**to seize authority.**” This word’s **first** occurrence clearly meaning “exercise authority” is **three centuries** later.^{xii} The New Testament uses a different word for “exercise authority.” This word could mean either “to dominate” or, more commonly, 21 times, “to assume authority by seizing it.”

The King James translation, “usurp authority,” is therefore more accurate. The standard New Testament Dictionary defines this word “to **assume** a stance of **independent** authority.” The 2011 NIV’s **corrected** translation now reads, “to **assume** authority.”

Second, Paul typically uses the conjunction that links “to teach” with “to seize authority” to convey a **single** idea.^{xiii} Consequently, it does not prohibit **two** things: women teaching **or** women having authority over a man. It **only** prohibits one thing: women **seizing authority to teach a man**. It does not restrict women with recognized authority to teach, like Priscilla, who instructed Apollos in this same city. Paul greets her in Second Timothy.

Third, “I **do not** permit” is a misleading translation because this verb in Greek normally refers to something **limited** in time, **not** permanent. Furthermore, its grammatical form here **rarely** conveys a permanent prohibition. This grammatical form usually focuses on a presently **ongoing** permission or prohibition, so **should** be translated, “I **am not** permitting,” referring to the ongoing crisis in Ephesus rather than to a universal prohibition.

***** Fourth, if this verse **permanently** prohibits women from teaching, it **contradicts** the Bible’s **many** affirmations of women teaching. ***** These include Titus 2:3 “teach the **women elders ... to be teachers of** what is excellent”

***** God revealed even key portions of inspired **Scripture** through women including the songs of Miriam and Deborah, Hannah’s prayer, Abigail’s prophecy, the “*inspired utterance*” of King Lemuel’s mother, Elizabeth’s blessing, and Mary’s Magnificat, the first Christian **exposition of Scripture.**^{xiv}

***** Thus, 1 Timothy 2:12 addresses a **specific** problem of deceived women in the church in Ephesus conveying false doctrine. It prohibits women in **that** church from **seizing** authority to teach a man. Women teaching with recognized teaching authority, like Priscilla, would not be

seizing authority. Paul does **not** prohibit women everywhere or at all times from teaching or having authority over men.

*** Objection 4:** women must not be **elders, overseers, or pastors** of local churches, because the Bible identifies only men, never women, in local church leadership.

In fact, apart from **Christ**, the New Testament doesn't name **anyone**, man or woman, as an **overseer** or **pastor**. * John "the elder" and Peter "the fellow-elder" do not specify a local church and may refer to their being elders of the whole church as **apostolic eyewitnesses**.

* The Bible gives **only** one person a specific **local** church leadership title: "Phoebe deacon of the church of Cenchreae." It's "virtually **certain** that Phoebe is being described as 'a (or possibly 'the') deacon' of the church."^{xv}

* Paul encourages all believers to aspire to be overseers by stating, "**Whoever** aspires to the office of overseer desires a noble task."^{xvi} * The subject of the qualifications for elders in Titus 1 is also "**anyone**." In the original Greek, there's not a **single** "he, him, or his" or **any other** limitation to men in either list, contrary to most English translations.

* Some think that "**man of one woman**" excludes women, but even leading advocates of patriarchy, Moo and Schreiner, acknowledge that this does **not** exclude women.^{xvii} "Man of one woman" is widely regarded as an idiomatic **phrase** for fidelity in marriage.^{xviii} It is wrong to treat one word of an idiomatic phrase as a **separate** requirement, in this case "man."^{xix}

Furthermore, since Phoebe was a deacon and the qualifications for **women** are included in the qualifications for **deacons** in 1 Timothy 3:11, "men of one woman" in the very next verse must **not** exclude women. * Even the fourth century advocate of patriarchy, John Chrysostom, wrote, " 'men of one woman' **also applies to women** deacons."^{xx} He understood that Greek masculine forms do **not** exclude women. There are between 7500 and 8000 masculine forms in the New Testament that either must or could include women, roughly one per verse.^{xxi} As Gordon Hugenberger has shown, it's common for biblical requirements for men also to apply to **women**.^{xxii}

*** Objection 5:** Paul commands three times, "Let women be **silent** in the churches" in 1 Corinthians 14:34 to 35.

Although early manuscripts of the Qur'an contain significant textual variants, Islam has widely taught that the text of the Qur'an has never changed. In contrast, since the time of Origen, the church has **always** acknowledged textual variants in manuscripts. The Chicago

Statement on Biblical Inerrancy Article X affirms “that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God **to the extent that** they faithfully represent the **original**.” The scientific principles of textual criticism permit reconstruction of the original text of the New Testament with remarkable fidelity from thousands of surviving manuscripts. The earliest manuscripts of Mark do not include the long ending (Mark 16:9–20), and there’s compelling evidence that it was not in the original text of Mark. The long ending assures believers in verse 18 that “they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all.” Because it was not in the original text, it is not God’s authoritative message for the church even though millions of Bibles include it. Similarly, **only** if 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 were in Paul’s original letter, would it have authority. **Seven** reasons from manuscripts and **nine** reasons from the words in these verses convince me and many others that they were not in Paul’s original letter but were added later.^{xxiii} I’ll now summarize just three of these sixteen reasons.

* First, the obvious meaning of these verses contradicts statements throughout this chapter that “**all**” may teach and prophesy and chapter 11’s rules for women prophesying.

* Second, no other passage nearly this long occurs in manuscripts of Paul’s letters in two separate locations so far apart with no obvious reason.

Third, the oldest Bible marks these verses as a spurious later addition.^{xxiv}

I’ll now comment on these points. **First**, these verses contradict many other statements in this chapter. * To avoid contradiction, many say that Paul silences *only disruptive chatter* or, first proposed in 1962,^{xxv} *only judging* prophesies. But these narrow interpretations don’t fit this passage’s unqualified demands for silence repeated three times for maximum emphasis. Furthermore, if verse 34 prohibits **only** judging prophesies, v. 34 **permits** speech that verse 35 **prohibits**. After all, married women asking questions out of a desire to learn is totally unlike judging prophesies and is rarely disruptive. By these interpretations Paul contradicts what he had just written. Clearly, whoever wrote these words intended women not to speak at all, **even** married women asking questions out of a desire to learn.

* **Second**, these verses follow verse 40 in every “Western” Greek manuscript, but in most other manuscripts they follow verse 33. * Here’s the famous 6th century “Western” Codex D. This image’s first full paragraph is the end of chapter 14. Its next paragraph is verses 34 to 35. Its last paragraph begins chapter 15.

The two locations of verses 34 to 35 strongly suggest that someone wrote them in the margin and later copyists inserted them either after verse 33 or 40. Let me explain:

* The **fundamental** principle in determining the **original** text of Scripture is: “the text

that best explains the emergence of **all** other texts is most likely original.”

* No manuscript of any letter by Paul moves **any** other block of text **nearly** this large this far without an obvious reason and no early reader criticized this text’s location.^{xxvi} But Ulrich Schmid has documented that it was **common** for scribes to copy text in the margin **into** the main text, just like secretaries do today.

* For example, the fourth century Codex Vaticanus, has 20 instances of old text in the margins of Matthew. All but 3 are in the main text of virtually every subsequent manuscript.

* Greeks believed strongly that women should be silent in public congregations.^{xxvii} So it’s hardly surprising that a reader sometime before AD 200 added in the margin the “conventional wisdom” these verses express. * The **only** explanation of these verses’ two locations that fits known scribal conventions is that someone first wrote these two verses in the margin of a manuscript, and later copyists inserted them either after verse 33 or verse 40.

Common sense demands that something **customary**—inserting text from the margin into the main text—is more likely to occur than something so **extraordinary** that no other instance is known—moving so much text so far away with no obvious reason.^{xxviii}

* **Third**, our oldest Bible, Codex Vaticanus, widely praised for its accuracy, marks these verses silencing women in church as a **spurious** interruption. The red triangle in the upper image identifies the **gap** at the precise point where Matthew 18:11—which is not in most recent Bibles^{xxix}—interrupts the original text in some manuscripts. The red triangle in the lower image identifies the precise point where 1 Corinthians 14:34 to 35 interrupts the original text. * 15 times in Vaticanus, two dots and a bar like these underlined in red identify lines with a **gap** at the precise point the original text was interrupted.

* Other manuscripts preserve interruptions of at least **four** consecutive words at **all 15** gaps. Such long interruptions occur on average only once in **83.5** lines of Vaticanus text.

If these symbols were **unrelated** to spurious interruptions and 15 random Vaticanus lines were selected every second nonstop for 100 trillion **years**, the odds that all 15 lines would coincide with a four-or-more-word interruption **even once** is less than one in two thousand.^{xxx}

Furthermore, these long interruptions occur not just somewhere on these lines, but precisely **at the gap** on **all 15** lines adjacent to the original scribe’s two-dot-plus-bar symbols.

* A horizontal bar was the standard symbol in Greek literature to mark where the original text was interrupted by spurious added text. **This scribe** clearly understood this, because this scribe **explained** three times in Isaiah that horizontal bars mark added text, and in all three, just like the fifteen in the New Testament, left a **gap** in the text precisely where added

text interrupts the original text. **Only** the original scribe could leave gaps in the text.

* This scribe’s judgment that “let women be silent” is spurious text should not be dismissed for two reasons. First, both standard editions of the Greek New Testament agree with this scribe that the blocks of text inserted at **every other** two-dot plus bar symbol are **spurious** additions. Second, the **variety** of manuscripts containing these additions shows that this scribe had access to **far more** pre-Vaticanus New Testament text than we have today.

* Dan Wallace incorrectly states, “these verses occur *in all witnesses to 1 Corinthians*.”^{xxxix} In fact, they don’t occur in Bishop Victor’s witness in Codex Fuldensis. Victor had a corrected text written in the bottom margin of Fuldensis that omits these verses.

* Furthermore, Vaticanus marks them as spurious. Furthermore, statements by both Clement of Alexandria writing in the 100s (c. 150–c. 215 CE) and Victorinus of Pettau writing in the 200s (died c. 303–304),^{xxxix} indicate that 14:34–35 was not in their texts of 1 Corinthians. Textual scholars assign separate manuscript symbols for different texts in the **same** manuscript, and 14:34–35 does **not** occur in all texts as distinguished by their separate manuscript symbols, *om. B¹–88* Fuldensis^m CI Vic TP* (transcriptional probability). Furthermore, even though 1 Corinthians was the most quoted epistle by Christian writers in the second century, **no Apostolic Father** cites them.

* Despite its first citation being circa 197, Wallace asserts, “they must have crept into ... the *original* document.” “Crept” implies something sneaky, but it was simply customary for scribes to copy text in the margin into the main text. As I explained before, the **earliest** manuscripts of Ephesians 5:22 have **no** verb *submit*, but *submit* occurs in every manuscript of Ephesians 5:22 following its first appearance in a New Testament manuscript, Sinaiticus, circa 360. The **rapid** universal adoption of *submit* shows that a reader writing 14:34–35 in the margin of any manuscript of 1 Corinthians before late in the second century could **easily** explain every surviving manuscript of this part of 1 Corinthians.^{xxxiii}

* Many leading textual experts conclude that Paul did not write these verses.^{xxxiv} The famous Roman Catholic scholar, Joseph Fitzmyer, notes that “the majority of commentators today” conclude it is a later addition. Textual scholar Kim Haines-Eitzen states this of “nearly all scholars now.” David Bentley Hart’s new Greek Orthodox translation rejects these verses as “almost certainly spurious.” The German Bible Society’s new Bible states that these verses, “contradict what Paul says in chapter 11” and are “probably a later insertion.”^{xxxv}

* The Vaticanus two-dot-plus-bar symbols show that Paul did not write 14:34–35, so did not contradict himself. Furthermore, they provide our strongest statistical confirmation of the reliability of the transmission of the entire New Testament, especially the Gospels. The

original scribe of Vaticanus took great care to copy its exemplar manuscripts' text, punctuation, and Origen's edits without changing or adding to them. Vaticanus's Gospels' text is extraordinarily early, so early that it has virtually no periods at the end of sentences. In contrast, there are periods after **every** sentence in **every** Vaticanus epistle and some early papyri. The Vaticanus Gospel's text is so early that it does not include *any* of the blocks of spurious text the Vaticanus Gospel's thirteen two-dot-plus-bar symbols mark.^{xxxvi}

*** Objection 6.** God calls woman man's "**helper**" in Genesis 2:18, 20 so women must be **subordinate** to men.

Wait a minute! The narrative structure of Genesis 2 climaxes in the creation of woman, highlighting man's need for a partner corresponding to him. God says, "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 helper, the rescuer of people in need, their strength or power; the remaining three times (Isa 30:5; Dan 11:34; Hos 13:9) it describes a military **protector**. It **never** requires subordination or submission to the one rescued. * The original Hebrew text calls woman "a strength as in front of him," namely "a strength corresponding to him."

*** Objection 7.** 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, not God's decree of what **should** be. Like every other result of the fall, this is something new, not in the original creation. It's a distortion of God's design for man and woman **together** to have dominion. John Piper and Wayne Grudem, leading advocates of male hierarchy agree that this "is not a prescription of what should be."^{xxxvii}⁴ But desiring to find male hierarchy before the fall, they claim that "he shall rule over you" refers only to **harsh** rule. But the word for "rule" here does **not** imply **harsh** 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 used for **God's** rule.

* Since man's ruling over woman is a **result** of the fall, man must **not** have ruled over

⁴ 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.

woman **before** the Fall. Christ, the seed of the woman, overcame the fall (Gen 3:15; 1 Cor 15:45). Those freed by Christ should **not** foster any of the tragic consequences the fall introduced, including man's rule over woman.

* Let's recap what the Bible really teaches about these seven objections:

1. Instead of male headship, men and women should **share** leadership.
2. Men and women should "submit to **one another**" in the church and in marriage.
3. Women may **teach** in church.
4. Paul encourages **all** believers to aspire to the office of **overseer**.
- * 5. The Bible encourages women to **speak**, even prophesy, in church.
6. Genesis describes woman: "I will make a **strength corresponding to him**,"
NOT a subordinate "helper."
7. "**He will rule over you**" is something NEW resulting from the Fall,
NOT God's decree of what should be.

A close examination of these seven alleged biblical objections to women in leadership reveals that the Bible teaches, instead, that women and men are equally free to lead as God gifts and guides them.

* The problem with these seven objections to women in leadership is not just that the Bible does not teach what they allege. Their crucial problem is that so many foundational **principles** of the Bible directly oppose this, including each the following 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**.

* **Mutual** submission in the **church** entails the equality of men and women, as does **mutual** submission in **marriage**,
the **oneness** of Christ's body,
the **priesthood** of **all** believers,
liberty in Christ,
the **new creation**,
and **inaugurated** eschatology.

- * The Spirit gifts **all** for ministry,
The nature of church leadership as **service** applies **equally** to men and women.

Paul introduces his conclusion to how men and women should lead worship in prayer and prophecy in 1 Corinthians 11:11 with the word he consistently uses to break off a discussion and emphasize what is **important**.^{xxxviii} “The important point, however, is that woman is not separate from man, nor is man separate from woman in the Lord.” Galatians 3:28 similarly affirms, “there is no male-female division in Christ.” Paul’s wording and parallel passages show that this describes the church. He had just rebuked Peter for withdrawing from table fellowship with gentiles as contrary to the gospel. To exclude all women from church leadership is surely even more contrary to the gospel and to our unity in Christ.

- * The Bible approves **many** women in church **leadership**. It calls men and women to **share** authority and to **mutual** submission in the **church** and in **marriage**. The Bible teaches the equality of men and women in the church and in the home. The weight of the biblical evidence shows that each of these objections misunderstands the text. There is no solid biblical foundation for excluding women from positions of authority over men. Scripture affirms instead that the Spirit gifts all believers for Christlike ministry. We must not limit women from proclaiming the gospel. It is wrong to quench the Spirit by excluding all women from any particular exercise of their spiritual gifts. We must not stand in the way of God’s calling and guidance of women, but rather rejoice that Christ is the model for us all. *

Any more questions?

- * The interruption is in the text of Vaticanus only here in 1 Corinthians 14. Why? Scribe B copied the **Gospels** from a manuscript with a **much earlier text** than Vaticanus’s epistles.

- * Scribe B **faithfully copied the text** of the epistles without removing “let women be silent,” **but marked it as spurious** later-added text, just like scribe B did 121 times in Vaticanus’s OT Prophets

- * **Objection 8.** There were no women **apostles**, so there should be no women in church **leadership**.

It is equally true that Jesus didn’t appoint any **Gentile** or **slave** among the twelve. Does that mean these should be excluded from church leadership? The Gospels do not explain why

Jesus chose twelve Jewish men. Jesus's appointment of twelve Jewish men, however, have an obvious parallel with the twelve sons of Israel and reinforced the symbolism of the church as the "new Israel." Nothing in the Gospels states or implies that Jesus intended this to exclude women from church leadership.

Jesus must not have wanted only male disciples because he encouraged **women as disciples**.⁵ 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 announce the gospel of his resurrection and coming ascension to God the Father (John 20:14-18). Christ appointed her **apostle to the apostles**:

* Thomas Aquinas wrote that Mary Magdalene had the office of an apostle to the apostles. Furthermore, Paul identifies **Junia** as "outstanding among the **apostles**" in Rom 16:7. This group included James, the pivotal person in the Jerusalem Council (Gal 1:19) and Paul, whose gentile mission transformed the church.

* **Objection 9.** In the Old Testament, God approves only male **priests**.

God did assign the priesthood to Aaron and his sons (Numbers 18:1-7). Although no reason for this is given, Deuteronomy 23:17 NRSV may imply one: "None of the daughters of Israel shall be a temple prostitute." There was a strong association of priestesses in surrounding heathen cults with prostitutes and cultic sexual rites. God repeatedly forbade his people from giving an appearance of following the immoral practices of the surrounding nations. To have women priests would have given that appearance. In fact, Exodus 38:8, explicitly identifies "*women who served at the entrance to the Tent of*

Meeting (the Tabernacle)", and 1 Samuel 2:22 states that Eli heard that his sons "*slept with the women who served at the entrance to the Tent of Meeting.*"

Nevertheless, 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 be called **priests** of the LORD, you will be named **ministers** of our God."

* **Objection 10.** The "**Creation Order**" establishes **man's** priority **over** woman.

Nothing in Genesis teaches that 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

⁵ E.g. John 4:14-26; 11:25-26.

theme: Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, Judah over his older brothers, Moses over Aaron, David over his brothers, and so on.

The Genesis account of creation teaches not hierarchy, but that man and woman **together have dominion** over the earth. God created man and woman equally in his image.

This equality is not limited to spiritual standing before God, but includes **shared authority** over the earth. **Contrary** to the male-oriented custom in Moses' day, 2:24 calls the **man**, not his wife, to leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife. The creation account does not grant man priority in status or authority over woman, but throughout emphasizes their **equality**.⁶

* Genesis' Creation account throughout stresses the equality of man and woman.

* **Objection 11.** The Old Testament pattern of **male leadership** shows that God approves **only male leaders**.

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

Queen Esther had sufficient influence to save her people from imminent genocide and to bring about the destruction of the house of Haman along with 75,000 enemies of the Jews. 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). Jezebel and Athaliah wicked (1 Kgs 18:4), like kings, The Bible does not criticize any woman leader **on the grounds** that **women** should not have authority over **men**.

* Priests consulted The prophet **Huldah** on finding the lost book of the Law. Men in spiritual leadership over Israel sought instruction from her. The king, the elders, the prophets, and the people accepted her word as divinely revealed (2 Kgs 22:14–23:3; 2 Chr 34:22–32). Their obedience to her sparked what is probably the greatest revival in the history of Israel (2 Kgs 22:14–23:25; 2 Chr 34:29–35:19).

The Old Testament expresses hope that **all** people, men and women, should take spiritual leadership as prophets. **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; This was fulfilled at Pentecost, Acts 2:14–21).

Never does the Bible state that women leaders are **exceptions** to a scriptural principle. The Old Testament describes **God** appointing women to both secular and sacred leadership.

⁶ E.g. Genesis 1:26–29; 2:23–24; 3:6–13.

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

Nowhere does Scripture teach that women are permanently excluded from roles of teaching or having authority over men in the church. To the contrary, Paul twice denies division between male and female in Christ.

Paul introduces 1 Corinthians 11:11 with the word he consistently uses for “breaking off a discussion and emphasizing what is **important**”⁷: “The important point, however, is that woman is not **separate** from man, nor is man **separate** from woman **in the Lord**.” Standard Greek dictionaries do not support the translation “independent” regarding persons. Anthony Thiselton notes that “is not independent of” “adds a nuance which goes beyond the adverb χωρίς [*chōris*].”⁸ Paul states that woman and man are not separate in the **context** of affirming that women, like men, may pray and **prophecy**, 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 highlights this as his main point: **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, because he stood condemned ... [of] **hypocrisy** ... [and] **not** acting in line with the truth of the gospel” (Galatians 2:11–14 NIV). In defending his denunciation of Peter’s unequal treatment of gentiles, Paul asserts the principle of the **equality** 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. There are forty-two theological, historical, cultural, contextual, and exegetical reasons Galatians 3:28 should **not** be limited to who can be saved, but must have practical implications in church life. This verse is a call to **radically new** social interaction based on **equality** in the body of Christ, the church. In Christ there is no male-female division. Excluding women from leadership roles in church is precisely such a male-female division that Galatians 3:28 denounces.

Peter clearly repented of his hypocrisy and action contrary to the gospel because he praises “**all Paul’s letters**,” which **always** include Galatians, as **Scripture** (2 Peter 3:15–16). Those who **say** they affirm the equality of men and women **yet restrict** the roles of women in church

⁷ BDAG; A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1934), 1187 Blass “to single out the main point.” BDF§449 (p. 234) “in Paul, used to conclude a discussion and emphasize that is essential.”

⁸ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 841.

leadership should follow Peter's example and repent. They should acknowledge with Paul that making such a male-female division in the church is **contrary** to the **gospel**.

* Now, let's recap what the Bible really teaches about these twelve objections:

1. The Bible does not teach male headship but rather that men and women should **share** leadership.

2. The Bible teaches mutual submission in marriage.

3. Women may teach and have authority over men in the church.

4. Paul encourages **all** believers to aspire to the office of **overseer**.

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

6. Woman is a "strength corresponding to man," not his subordinate "helper."

* 7. **Male** rule is a result of the **fall**.

8. The Twelve male apostles no more exclude women from church leadership than they exclude gentiles or slaves. Junia was "outstanding among the apostles."

9. The biblical ideal is that **all** believers should be priests and should prophesy.

10. The sequence of creation does not establish a hierarchy of authority.

11. God appointed women in leadership in the Old Testament.

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

A close examination of these twelve reasons that I **thought** restricted authority to men reveals that the Bible teaches, instead, that women and men are equally free to lead as God gifts and guides them.

* The problem with these twelve objections to including women in leadership is not just that none of the texts they appeal to actually affirm this. Their crucial problem is that so many foundational **principles** of the Bible directly **oppose** this, including each the following 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**.

* **Mutual** submission in the **church** entails the equality of men and women, as does

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

* The Spirit gifts **all** believers for ministry.

The nature of church leadership as **service** applies **equally** to men and women.

Paul introduces his conclusion to how men and women should lead worship in prayer and prophecy in 1 Corinthians 11:11 with the word he consistently uses to break off a discussion and emphasize what is **important**.^{xxxix} “The important point, however, is that woman is not separate from man, nor is man separate from woman in the Lord.” Galatians 3:28 similarly affirms, “there is no male-female division in Christ.” * Paul's wording and parallel passages show that this describes the church. He had just rebuked Peter for withdrawing from table fellowship with gentiles as contrary to the gospel. To exclude all women from church leadership is surely even more contrary to the gospel and to our unity in Christ.

In addition, everywhere else Paul cites “the **law**” he quotes Scripture, but “the law” (14:34) never commands women to be in submission or to be silent in religious gatherings. *In fact, Psalm 68:11 (12 MT) states, “The Lord announced the word; the **women** proclaiming it are a **great company**.”

ⁱ LSJ⁹ 801; D. Dhimitrakou, *Μεγα Λεξικόν Ολης της Ελληνικής Γλώσσης* (9 vols.; Athens: Oikos Dhimitrakou, 1933–1950) 5:3880 [using the OdysseyUBSU font from <https://www.linguistsoftware.com/lgku.htm>].

ⁱⁱ Moulton and Milligan, Friedrich Preisigke, Pierre Chantraine, S. C. Woodhouse, the LSJ supplements by E. A. Barber, R. Renahan, and P. G. W. Glare and the thirteen additional lexicons cited by Richard S. Cerv in, “Does *Kephalē* mean ‘Source’ or ‘Authority Over’ in Greek Literature? A Rebuttal,” *Trinity Journal* 10 NS (1989) 85–112, at 86–87.

ⁱⁱⁱ Referring to the best-attested Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures, as found in Rahlfs and the Göttingen editions of the Septuagint, a.k.a. LXX. Our English Bibles translate most of them “head,” e.g. NASB 116 times and ASV 115 times, because *leader* is an established meaning of *head* in English.

^{iv} *eis kephalēn* [using the TranslitLSU font from <https://www.linguistsoftware.com/stu.htm>].

^v For example, the addition of “as ruler over them” following “as head” in Judges 11:11 provided a meaning for “as head” that otherwise would not have been obvious to Greek readers.

^{vi} “the head (κεφαλή), from whom ἐξ οὗ the whole body ... grows” in Colossians 2:19; Ephesians 4:15–16. Colossians 1:18 explains, “He is the head [αὐτός ἐστιν ἡ κεφαλή] of the body, the church, ὅς ἐστιν ἡ ἀρχή, who “is the source [‘origin’ (NEB)] of the body’s life” (TEV/GNT). 1:16–17: “for in him all things were created ... all things were created through him ... and in him all things hold together” ... “through the blood of the cross” (1:20) Christ “reconciled you in his fleshly body through death” (1:22). 1 Corinthians 11:3abc, 4b, 5b. Note the spatial references in Ephesians 1:20–22: “in the heavenly places, far above ... under ... gave him, *apex* over all things, to the church [τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ].” Colossians 2:9–10, “For in him [Christ] the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to the fulness of life in him, who is the apex of all rule authority.”

^{vii} Every related NT word refers to leadership; cf. Philip B. Payne, “What About Headship? From Hierarchy to

Equality,” in *Mutual by Design: A Better Model of Christian Marriage* (ed. E. Beyer; Minneapolis, MN: CBE 2017) 150–152.

^{viii} Cf. 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.

^{ix} The word *headship* never occurs in the Bible.

^x This explains why Paul specifically prohibited women in Ephesus from seizing authority to teach a man and why this passage has one imperative, “let the women learn” (1 Timothy 2:11).

^{xi} *authentain*.

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

^{xiii} 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 by Paul. Philip B. Payne, “Οὐδέ [*oude*] Combining Two Elements to Convey a Single Idea and 1 Timothy 2:12,” in *Missing Voices: Broadening the Discussion on Men, Women, and Ministry*, ed. Hilary Ritchie (Minneapolis: CBE International, 2014), 24–34 answers objections and illustrates this use of οὐδέ in Greek literature.

^{xiv} Exodus 15:21; Judges 5:2–31; 1 Samuel 2:1–10; 25:24–31; Proverbs 31 (31:1 “an inspired utterance his [King Lemuel’s] mother taught him” NIV) and Luke 1:25, 42–45, 46–55, Proverbs 31,

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

^{xvi} This encourages all believers to desire the office of overseer.

^{xvii} Douglas J. Moo, “The Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:11–15: A Rejoinder,” *Trinity Journal* 2 NS (1981) 198–222, at 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*” *JBMW* (Spring 2010) 33–46, at 35.

^{xviii} It is evident from funeral inscriptions that this idiom conveys fidelity.

^{xix} Therefore, any claim that a single word of it also functions as a separate requirement misuses the idiom and requires a double meaning. It’s wrong to isolate a single word of an idiomatic phrase and interpret that word as a separate requirement.

^{xx} Chrysostom wrote, “Some have thought that v. 11 is said of women generally, but it is not so, for why should he introduce anything about women to interfere with his subject? He is speaking of those who hold the rank of Deaconesses.” *NPNF*¹ 13:763; *NPNF*¹ 13:116.

^{xxi} Tim Friberg, co-author of *The Analytical Greek New Testament*, provided these numbers based on two counts through the entire Greek NT.

^{xxii} 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, at 360 n. 78, “norms that utilize male-oriented terminology ought to be construed in general as including both sexes.”

^{xxiii} Note that I believe that all the Bible affirms is true. For years I tried to defend interpretations of 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 as limited to particular kinds of speech. But I discovered that no early commentator understood them like this, nor would early Greek readers. I also discovered that no early manuscript supports linking 1 Corinthians 14:33b with 14:34.

^{xxiv} Codex Vaticanus B, which is widely regarded as the most reliable New Testament Greek manuscript.

^{xxv} W. Klein, “The Church and the Prophets,” *ATR* 44 (1962) 8.

^{xxvi} Ulrich Schmid, “Conceptualizing ‘Scribal’ Performances: Reader’s Notes,” in *The Textual History of the Greek New Testament: Changing Views in Contemporary Research*, ed. Klaus Wachtel and Michael Holmes (Atlanta: SBL, 2011), 49–64, at 62, 50, 58: Readers . . . react[ed] to what they read by adding comments in the margin. . . . Some of these notes could have been copied into the text by scribes who had to copy such an ‘embellished’ [manuscript]. . . . The inclination of scribes, at least in the view of the ancients, seems to have been toward the inclusion of marginal material into the main text.”

^{xxvii} E.g. Plutarch, Aristophanes, Aristotle, Sophocles, Democritus, Aelius Aristides, and many rabbis.

^{xxviii} This is called “transcriptional probability.” This is unique case. The key reason we recognize it as marginal text does not undermine the reliability of any other text.

^{xxix} E.g. NIV, ESV, CEV, DLNT, ERV, GNT, Phillips, CJB, NABRE, NIVUK, NRSV, RSV, TLV, and in brackets in AMP, HCSB, ICB, LSB, NASB, NCV, NIRV, Voice.

^{xxx} If the bars and dots were unrelated to insertions, the odds of this happening somewhere on all 15 lines are one in 83.5¹⁵. This is less than one in 6.6880134 x 10²⁸ (10²⁸ = 100 trillion times 100 trillion). There are 31,536,000 seconds in a year.

^{xxx}ⁱ <https://bible.org/article/textual-problem-1-corinthians-1434-35>

^{xxx}ⁱⁱ Commentary on the Apocalypse, 10.3 (ANF 7.353). “Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge [14:29]. And he says: Every woman that prays or prophesies with her head uncovered, dishonours her head [11:5]. And when he says, Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge... whether or not the interpretation is consistent with the testimonies of the prophetic utterance.”

^{xxx}ⁱⁱⁱ Colossians 3:18 specifies that a wife should submit “in all ways that are appropriate in the Lord.” The reason the Bible gives for a wife’s submission is not a divinely-instituted gender hierarchy, but “in order that God’s Word not be blasphemed” [Titus 2:5], to act in ways that do not offend cultural norms. Cf. “so that, even if some of their husbands do not obey the word, they may be won over without a word by their wives’ conduct...Husbands in the same way [submit yourselves to your own wives], dwelling together wisely, recognizing her as a weaker feminine [BDAG 208, *gynaikeios*, “feminine.”] precious vessel, and assign them the honor they deserve as coheirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that your prayers won’t be hindered” [1 Peter 3:1, 7].

^{xxx}^{iv} Philip B. Payne, *Man and Woman, One in Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009) 226–227 identifies fifty-five studies that conclude this. These include the most famous evangelical textual scholar, Gordon Fee, and recently, Richard Fellows.”

^{xxx}^v *BasisBibel* p. 1788, “Frauen: Die Verse 34-35 widersprechen dem, was Paulus in 1. Korinther 11,2-16 über die Rolle von Frauen in der Gemeinde sagt. Hier handelt es sich vermutlich um einen späteren Einschub.”

^{xxx}^{vi} Abundant evidence shows that the original scribe of Vaticanus took great care to copy its exemplar manuscripts’ text, punctuation, and, in the Prophets, hexaplaric “bar” symbols and their associated textual additions inserted by Origen, without changing or adding to them. In many respects, including its lack of periods at the end of sentences, spellings, and much smaller set of nomina sacra abbreviations, the Vaticanus Gospels text is even earlier than Papyrus 75, which Bruce Metzger dated between 175 and 225.

As at 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, Vaticanus’s scribe did not remove any of those additions even though marking them as added text.

This explains why the only instance of the two-dot plus bar symbol in Vaticanus’s epistles includes the spurious text, but none of the thirteen blocks of added text marked by the two-dot plus bar symbol are in the Vaticanus Gospels. The Vaticanus Gospels were copied from a manuscript that was so early that it was not corrupted by any of the thirteen blocks of added text known to Vaticanus’s original scribe, but the Vaticanus epistles were copied from a later manuscript that included 1 Corinthians 14:34–35. Vaticanus’s original scribe faithfully preserved the added text of Vaticanus’s exemplar manuscripts, but marked those additions as spurious.

The two-dot plus bar symbols also support the truth of Scripture by showing that 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 was not in Paul’s original letter, so originally was not Scripture. This resolves what, otherwise, would be a contradiction within Scripture.

^{xxx}^{vii} 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.

^{xxx}^{viii} BDAG 826, “breaking off a discussion and emphasizing what is important”; A. T. Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research* (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1934), 1187, citing Blass, “to single out the main point.” BDF§449 (p. 234) “in Paul, used to conclude a discussion and emphasize that is essential.”

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