

Is the ‘slippery slope’ argument against ordaining women valid?

By [Philip B. Payne](#), Contributor | Saturday, July 15, 2023

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One argument that patriarchal Christians commonly use against women’s ordination is the “slippery slope”: the ordination of women will lead to the ordination of people in same-sex unions.

Wayne Grudem’s *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* exemplifies this. This is part of a broader argument that affirming women’s ordination somehow waters down the Bible’s authority, leading Christians to abandon traditional sexual ethics, namely God’s ideal: sex between husband and wife.

While much can be said against the slippery slope argument, this article will focus on the many supporters of gender equality in the Church who also cite Scripture to uphold traditional sexual ethics. To make this case, this article will briefly cover four points:

1. Many denominations ordain women but not those in same-sex relationships.
2. The largest Evangelical egalitarian organization, Christians for Biblical Equality, affirms the traditional view that “marriage [is] between a woman and a man.”
3. Advocates for women in ministry have provided articulate exegetical rebuttals of attempts to defend gay ordination.
4. The Bible repeatedly affirms women’s ministry but not gay sex.

Point 1: The Christian Post recently published an article highlighting five theologically conservative denominations that affirm women pastors:

Assemblies of God
Christian and Missionary Alliance
ECO = Covenant Order of Evangelical Presbyterians
Evangelical Presbyterian Church
Global Methodist Church

In addition, all of these denominations ordain women but not practicing gays:

Brethren in Christ Church
Canadian Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches
The Christian Reformed Church in North America
Church of the Brethren
The Eastern Orthodox Church (diaconate only)
The International Church of the Foursquare Gospel
The National Baptist Convention
Mennonite Church Canada
Mennonite Church USA
Reformed Church in America
Association of Vineyard Churches.

On June 29, Scarlett Clay wrote in CP that all mainline denominations that ordain women have approved ordaining practicing gays. But Wikipedia classifies American Baptist Churches USA, the fifth largest denomination in the USA as “mainline.” In November 2005, the General Board of the ABCUSA voted to amend the document entitled “We Are American Baptists” by stating that American Baptists are a people who “submit to the teaching of Scripture that God’s design for sexual intimacy places it within the context of marriage between one man and one woman, and acknowledge that the practice of homosexuality is incompatible with biblical teaching.”

Similarly, the Anglican Communion Lambeth Conference of 1998 called gay relationships “incompatible with Scripture.” The Anglican Church of Australia in 2017 passed a motion recognizing “that the doctrine of our church, in line with traditional Christian teaching, is that marriage is an exclusive and lifelong union of a man and a woman, and further, recognizes that this has been the subject of several General Synod resolutions over the past 15 years.” The

Fellowship of Confessing Anglicans, a global network of conservative Anglican churches represents more than two thirds of Anglicans throughout the world. They include The Anglican Church of North America. It affirms only two expressions of faithful sexuality: lifelong marriage between a man and a woman or abstinence.

Point 2: The statement of faith of the largest evangelical egalitarian organization, Christians for Biblical Equality, with leaders in more than 100 denominations and 214 countries states: “We believe the Bible is the inspired Word of God, is reliable, and is the final authority for faith and practice.” Its core values include: “Scripture is our authoritative guide for faith, life, and practice. God’s design for relationships includes faithful marriage between a woman and a man, celibate singleness, and mutual submission in Christian community.” This explicitly protects against the “slippery slope.”

Point 3: Advocates for women in ministry have been at the forefront of providing articulate exegetical rebuttals of attempts to defend the ordination of practicing gays and attempts to legitimize gay practice. They include Richard B. Hays, “Relations Natural and Unnatural: A Response to John Boswell’s Exegesis of Romans 1,” and David F. Wright, “Homosexuals or Prostitutes? The Meaning of ΑΠΣΕΝΟΚΟΙΤΑΙ (1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10),” “Homosexuality: The Relevance of the Bible.”

As I argued in my [Christian Post essay here](#), in 1 Corinthians 11:2–16, Paul prohibits men leading in worship from styling their hair like women because this was done to attract same-sex hookups. This is also why Paul in 11:7 asserts that “woman [not another man] is the glory of man” and in 11:9, that “woman was created for man.”

Remember that shortly before this in 1 Corinthians 6:9, Paul referred to “men who have sex with men.” This translates two Greek words that refer to the passive and active participants in gay acts. Then in 6:11, he writes, “And such were some of you.” The Roman historian Livy (59 BC–AD 17) writes that in Dionysiac cult initiation rites near Corinth “there were more lustful practices among men with one another than with women.” 1 Corinthians 11:2–16, therefore, provides a biblical basis not just for ministry by women (prayer and prophecy, the vertical and horizontal dimensions of worship), but for not ordaining practicing gays, since that would put a seal of approval on gay acts that God calls detestable (Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13).

Point 4: The Bible repeatedly affirms women’s ministry but repudiates gay sex. This shows that the Bible regards them as fundamentally different and unrelated.

In Romans 16 alone, Paul greets by name 10 people he identifies as co-workers. Seven are women: “Phoebe, deacon of the church of Cenchreae ... leader (*prostatis* LSJ ‘one who stands before ... leader, chief ... president’) of many, including me” (1–2), “Prisca ... fellow worker in Christ Jesus,” (3), “Mary ... worked hard among you” (6), “Junia ... outstanding among the apostles” (7, Eldon Epp, *Junia*), “Tryphaena and Tryphosa, who worked hard in the Lord” (12), and “the beloved Persis, who has worked very hard in the Lord” (12).

Hellenistic literature offers no comparable affirmation of women leaders. 1 Corinthians 11:2–16

approves prophesying by women. Even the Orthodox Presbyterian Church five-member three-year study on Women in Ordained Office [concluded](#):

“If 1 Corinthians 11 ... is read on its own terms, its plain suggestion is that women praying and ... prophesying in public meetings of the church are recognized and accepted practices; nothing in the passage even intimates disapproval.”

Nowhere, however, does the Bible teach that practicing gays should be put in positions of ministry leadership. Quite the contrary, 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:6 require that overseers and elders be “above reproach.” There is nothing in the Bible regarding women in ministry corresponding to Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:26–27 and 1 Timothy 1:10’s descriptions of gay acts.

In conclusion, the “slippery slope” argument against women’s ordination is nonsense. It incorrectly identifies the ordination of women as what leads churches to ordain those in same-sex unions. Like most Evangelical egalitarians, I uphold the Bible’s authority and believe in traditional sexual ethics. We support gender equality in the Church not despite what the Bible teaches, but because of the Bible’s affirmations of women in ministry.

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