

FOUNTAINGATE CHRISTIAN ASSEMBLY

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP POLICY

Discussion around the changing role of women in the church has been increasing greatly in the last few decades. It is a vital issue in order to achieve a healthy church. Societal preferences do have their way of attempting to change the doctrines of the church. We must carefully manoeuvre the direction we plan to take. That is the purpose of this policy. It is always better to be proactive when it comes to important decisions. Otherwise we tend to react and often make decisions that will create a host of problems.

Women are often underutilised and even underappreciated in the church. General Booth once said *“that his best men were women.”* What would the church be today without the faithfulness of our women who have served in many vital areas of ministry? Many women unfortunately still take the most active role of spiritual leadership in their homes which is contrary to the scriptures.

Jesus said,

“You nullify the Word of God by your tradition.”

Mark 7:13

We need to constantly beware of inputting our ideas and traditions into the teachings and practices of the church and in time moving the Word of God out of its foundational position.

Our duty as elders and leaders therefore, in the church, is to ensure that we uphold what God intended for the church’s spiritual leadership. We should never allow our preferences to take priority over the clear instructions given in God’s Word.

The problem that we are quickly faced within this study is finding the true interpretation of what the Holy Spirit intended for the Church when it comes to spiritual leadership. There has been a vast amount of study by those who are well equipped to discern the minute details that are uncovered in biblical interpretation. Some of their conclusions differ so we must wade into this discussion very carefully.

There has been an ongoing transition from egalitarian (all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities) practice to a patriarchal (the male head of a family or tribe) and hierarchical structure (an arrangement according to relative importance or inclusiveness) as early as 1925 in the Pentecostal movement. The Pentecostal Assemblies of Canada allowed for the ordination of women in 1984. This step found concord on the conference floor only once the office of ordination was stripped of its institutional authority. As an internal report at the 1984 conference suggested, *“ordination confers nothing! It is simply a recognition of the call of God and the consecration of the person to that call to certain types of ministry”*

What Was Practised in the Old Testament?

A. Eve - We would not be having this discussion if there never had been the sinful rebellion of Adam and Eve. God's original intent was that we would be equal in His eyes.

“Then God said, ‘let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth and over all the creatures that move along the ground.

27. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

28. God blessed them and said to them, ‘be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’”

Genesis 1:26 – 28

At this early point of Scripture we find that the word “*man*” (Hebrew – “*Adam*”) is not used as a proper name. It is a name given to both the male and female that God created. It was not until Genesis 2:20 that the name “*Adam*” was given as the proper name of the first male. There is no indication that there was a hierarchy in place prior to the sinful fall of Adam and Eve.

God judged their sinful action by placing a curse upon the serpent as well as pain and a new level of submission upon Eve toward her husband. God even cursed the ground so it would produce thorns and thistles. The judgement passed upon Adam was that he would sweat in burdensome labour for his food (Genesis 3:14 – 19). None of these judgments have ever been withdrawn in the Scriptures.

B. Miriam - The next woman that seems to stand out in the Old Testament is Miriam, the older sister of Moses. God used her to spare the life of her brother from the order that Pharaoh had given to murder every Hebrew boy by casting them into the Nile River (Exodus 1:22). It was Miriam who suggested that Jochabed (Moses' birth mother - Exodus 6:20) continue to nurse the three-month-old baby.

The next time we hear of Miriam is when the children of Israel made their way through the Red Sea. The Bible calls her a prophetess (Exodus 15:20,21). She led the other women with her tambourine into a time of celebration as they danced and sang before the Lord.

We are then brought to an incident that took place while the children of Israel were travelling through the wilderness of Sinai (Numbers 12:1 – 16). Aaron and Miriam began to speak against Moses and his Cushite wife. She was therefore, a descendant of Ham (Genesis 10:6 – 7) which seems to be the reason for their objection.

It is noted that they not only were wrong in bringing forth an accusation against Moses but it was truly their attitude which God was also correcting. Both Miriam and Aaron became prideful of the fact that God had spoken through them (Exodus 12:2). All three of them had been used of the Lord to redeem their people from Egyptian slavery (Micah 6:4).

The anger of the Lord was directed against both Aaron and Miriam. Miriam ended up having leprosy (or some type of infection of the skin). It appeared to be God's way of humbling her. A woman is still very conscious of her skin in our day and age. The children of Israel were not allowed to move for seven days as Miriam was confined outside of the camp as a symbol of the disgrace of her actions. **Miriam had to learn a lesson that she was never to usurp the authority that God had placed upon Moses.**

C. Deborah - Once again we are told that Deborah was called a prophetess (Judges 4:4). She served as the fourth judge of Israel. She was born into the tribe of Ephraim who was one of Joseph's sons. She was used of God during the time when there was a coalition of Canaanite tribes under the leadership of Sisera that was continuing to attack Israel.

We are not told how or why Deborah became not only a prophetess but also a judge in Israel. Yet we are given a bit of insight into her role at that particular time.

“Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lippidoth, was leading Israel at that time.”

Judges 4:4

The word translated “**leading**” in the NIV is, according to Strong's concordance, “a primitive root; to **judge**, that is, pronounced *sentence* (for or against); by implication to *vindicate* or *punish*; by extension to **govern**; passively to **litigate** (literally or figuratively): - + *avenge*, *X* that condemn, contend, defend, execute (judgment), (be a) judge (-ment), *X* needs, plead, reason, rule.”

In other words, she served in a position just like a court judge of our day with the authority to pronounce a legal judgment against anyone who had broken the law of Israel (Judges 4:5). **She was therefore, called upon to enforce the Mosaic Law not to produce it or make changes to the Law.** We also know from the book of Judges that all those in her position as a judge served as the commander of the Israeli army. She was therefore, the only woman to serve in this type of role in the Old Testament. It was an honourable position but it did have its limitations. She was still under authority.

D. Huldah - Here we have the third prophetess mentioned in the Old Testament. She was given her gifting by God at a crucial time in the history of Judah. They had just come through 55 years of being led by the wicked king Manasseh (II Kings 21:1). After the death of Manasseh, God chose Josiah as an eight-year-old to become the next king. This meant that he would need a number of spiritual advisers during his impressionable years.

We are told that on his eighteenth year of reigning as the king of Judah that the Book of the Law was found in the Temple of the Lord (II Kings 22:8). Hilkiah the high priest made sure that it was read to the king.

Josiah immediately sent for the one who could inquire of the Lord about what he had been told. It was at this time that they called forth Huldah to speak on God's behalf. She brought forth a clear message that God was going to judge Judah because of their idolatry, but it would not happen until after Josiah's death because he humbled his heart before the Lord. **She spoke forth what God placed into her heart and mind to say to king Josiah and his people.**

In all of these four cases we see that these women were given a gift that was exceptional and supernatural. The same is true of the men that God selected and supernaturally empowered to accomplish incredible victories like that of Elijah (I Kings 18). It was not just because God had selected them that their ministry was not questioned but also because they were able to accomplish feats that would be impossible without God's intervention. **God chose them, and empowered them and did not leave it up for debate.**

We are not to question God's wisdom or purpose behind His decisions. These women will always stand out in Scripture for their accomplishments. **They were definitely given positions of honour and respect at a time in history when male dominance was the order of the day.**

To keep in balance though we must also state that no woman ever ministered at the altars as either a priest or a Levite. In more than 700 verses which mention priests, every single one was a male. There is not one instance of a female priest. This is significant because priests were ordained by God to hold a very important office of ministering the sacrifices. No female elder was ever seen in a Hebrew congregation. No woman ever sat on the throne of the theocracy, except the pagan usurper and murderess, Athaliah (II Kings 11).

What Was Practised in the Early Church?

There are some who have made very clear statements of what they believe as follows.

“According to New Testament precedent and doctrine, the call to preaching and ruling in the church must go together. Every church elder is not a preacher, but every preacher of the church must be an elder of the church. It is clearly implied in 1 Timothy 5:17 that there were church elders who were not preachers, but never was there a preacher of the church who was not an elder. The scriptural qualifications for preaching, that is, the knowledge, holiness, experience, authority, dignity, purity, were even more exacting qualifications than those listed for elders. Truly, *“The greater includes the less.”* Therefore it is simply inconceivable that a person could experience a true call to the public preaching and teaching of the Word and not also called to be an elder. Therefore, if it is right for the woman to preach, she must also be a church elder.”

Robert Lewis Dabney (1820-1898)
“Women Preachers”
(The Public Preaching of Women)
October, 1879

Lets look at some of the important verses that help us to clarify what the early church was taught to believe.

*“I do not permit a woman to teach **or to have authority over a man**, but she must be silent.
13. For Adam was formed first, then Eve.
14. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.”*

1 Timothy 2:12-14

Paul was saying that God did not allow a woman to **usurp authority** over a man and in the process chooses a word for **“authority”** used only one time in the New Testament. According to Strong’s Lexicon, and Vine’s Word Studies, this word can mean either (1) one who with his own hands kills another or himself (2) **one who acts on his own authority, autocratic** (3) **an absolute master** or (4) **to govern, exercise dominion over one.**

Women were allowed to prophesy in the early church as long as their heads were covered which was a sign of their submissive manner to their husbands and the church elders (I Corinthians 11:5 – 6).

God set up an authority structure within the church. It is within that structure that a woman is not to have authority over a man. This does not mean that they do not have a role in the local church. Phoebe played an important role in the church at Cenchrea (Romans 16). There were also a number of women who supported Paul in many areas and were great helpers in the church (Act 2:17; 18:24; 21:8).

So what Paul has to be speaking of in I Timothy 2 is the relationship between men and women in the church structure and especially in the area of spiritual authority. It does not prohibit women from teaching other women and children.

In verse 11, Paul says that a woman should quietly receive instruction. Please note that the word “*heusychia*” which is translated “*quietness*” in I Timothy 2:11 and “*silent*” in verse 12 does not mean complete silence or no talking.

It is clearly used elsewhere (Acts 22:2; II Thessalonians 3:12) to mean “*settled down, undisturbed, not unruly.*” A different word “*sigaoμ*” means “*to be silent, to say nothing*” (cf. Luke 18:39; I Corinthians 14:34). **Paul is clearly advocating orderliness in this verse.**

When Paul wrote to Timothy he said,

- “Here is a trustworthy saying: ‘if anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, **he** desires a noble task.*
- 2. Now the overseer must be above reproach, **the husband of but one wife**, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,*
 - 3. not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.*
 - 4. **He** must manage **his** own family well and see that **his** children will pay him with proper respect.*
 - 5. (If anyone does not know how to manage **his** own family, how can **he** take care of God’s church?)*
 - 6. **He** must not be a recent convert, or **he** may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.*
 - 7. **He** must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that **he** will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap.”*

I Timothy 3:1-7

According to Paul's teachings we see that the **bishop/overseer** is to be the husband of one wife (I Timothy 3:2) who manages his household well and has a good reputation in his community (I Timothy 3:4, 7). Also deacons must be "*men worthy of respect*" (I Timothy 3:8). Paul then speaks of women (deaconesses) in verse 11 and their obligation to receive instruction. We are told that they are to be . . .

*“. . . women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers
but temperate and trustworthy in everything.”*

I Timothy 3:11

Then in verse 12, Paul once again specifically addresses the men and says . . .

*"A deacon must be **the husband** of but one wife . . ."*

I Timothy 3:11

Paul in writing to Titus says,

*"The reason I left you in Crete was that you might
straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint
elders in every town as I directed you.*

*"6. An **elder** must be blameless, **the husband of but
one wife, a man** whose children believe and are not
open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.*

*7. Since an **overseer** is entrusted with God's work,
he must be blameless – not overbearing not quick-
tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent not
pursuing dishonest gain.*

*8. Rather **he** must be hospitable, one who loves
what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy
and disciplined.*

*9. **He** must hold firmly to the trustworthy message
as it has been taught, so that **he** can encourage
others by sound doctrine and refute those who
oppose it."*

Titus 1:5 – 9

It's important to notice that Paul uses the words "**elder**" and "**overseer**" interchangeably. **In each case, the one who is an elder, deacon, bishop, or overseer is instructed to be a male.** He is the husband of one wife, responsible, able to "*encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.*" (Titus 1:9). **We see no command for the overseers to be women.**

On the contrary, women are told (as noted above) to be . . .

*“ . . . women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers
but temperate and trustworthy in everything.”*

I Timothy 3:11

Why is it that men are singled out as the overseers? It is because of the created order of God that Paul references (Genesis 1,2; I Timothy 2:12-14). Most contemporary scholars do not believe that this social custom ever fell away with ancient Israel.

Many take note of the fact that Paul said that they are to be *“the husband of but one wife.”* He did not say they are to be “the husband or wife of one spouse.” It also is clear that Paul spoke only of males by using the words *“he or his.”* Some believe that the Scriptures never directly say that these positions must be restricted to men, but rather use masculine terms because men would have been the most natural choices for such responsibility in first century communities. Yet we must also conclude that there were never any women in these positions in the early church.

Being a Pastor or Elder is to be in Authority

God is a God of order and balance. He has established order within the family (Genesis 3:16; I Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-21) and the church (I Timothy 2:11-14; I Corinthians 11:8,9).

Even within the Trinity there is an order and a hierarchy. The Father sent the Son (John 6:38) and both the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit (John 14:26; 15:26).

Jesus said,

*"For I have come down from heaven not to do my
will, but to do the will of him who sent Me,"*

John 6:38

It is clear that God is a God of order and structure in all levels of leadership.

In creation, God made Adam first and then Eve to be his helper. This was the order of creation. It is this order that Paul mentioned in 1 Timothy 2:11-14 when speaking of authority.

Serving as a pastor or an elder is to be acknowledged as having spiritual authority. Therefore, within the church, for a woman to be a senior pastor or elder, she would have to be in authority of men which would contradict what Paul said in I Timothy 2:11-14.

This by no means belittles the place of women in the body of Christ. Jesus was given His authority by God the Father (Matthew 28:18). He was sent by God (John 6:38). He said the Father was greater than He was (John 14:28). Did this belittle Jesus? Of course not.

Women are of great value in the church and need to be used more and more according to the gifts given them. Does a wife's submission to her husband mean that she is less than her husband, less important, or belittled? Again, not at all.

Not having a position of eldership in the church does not mean a woman is less of a person or inferior or less important to God. All are equal before God whether they are Jew, Gentile, free, slave, male, or female. But in the church, God has set up an order the same way He set one up for our families. The chain of command is Jesus, the man, the wife, and the children.

If women are excluded as elders in the church, they would not be the only ones. Paul made it clear that there were specific qualifications that every elder **“must”** have.

*“Here is a trustworthy saying: if anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.
2. Now the overseer **must** be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,
3. Not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.
4. He **must** manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect.
5. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church?)
6. He **must not** be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.
7. He **must** also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap.”*

I Timothy 3:1 – 7

*“An elder **must** be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient.
7. Since an overseer is entrusted with God’s work, he **must** be blameless – not overbearing not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent not pursuing dishonest gain.
8. Rather he **must** be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.
9. He **must** hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.”*

Titus 1:6 – 9

It is clear that those who did not have these qualifications were not fit to serve as elders.

Practise at Crete

Titus was the pastor of Crete. Toward the end of his life, Paul wrote Titus a letter. Crete was a challenging place to be a pastor. It claimed to be the birthplace of the Greek gods Zeus and Hera, and they capitalized on this with celebrations and giving tours of Zeus’ tomb. Every religion in the Roman Empire was there as well including the mystery religions that claimed to give secret knowledge to those who went through their initiations and became members.

In Crete young, married women tended to be left on their own after marriage. A woman would leave her father’s home and move into her husband and his family’s home. There she was never quite trusted because she was brought into the family, and could still have more loyalty to her birth family. These women were separated from the women they grew up with, and brought into houses with women who never trusted them, let alone helped them learn how to be wives and mothers.

Alcoholism was rampant among young women in Crete who could not handle the pressures and stress of married life. These women were also easy victims for religious charlatans. Secret sects along with the priests of Cybele would infiltrate themselves into the domestic sphere through these women, and several made a good living deceiving and manipulating them.

Crete was known for its lack of morals in all areas of life. In fact, to be called a Cretan meant that one was a thieving drunkard. Crete was the only place in the Roman Empire where dishonest gain was fine and in some cases encouraged. It was one of the most immoral places in the Roman Empire. And the Cretans took pride in that.

Paul instructs Titus, the pastor of Crete:

*“Likewise, **teach the older women** to be reverent in the way they live, not to be slanderers or addicted to much wine, but to teach what is good.”*

Titus 2:3

The Greek word that is normally translated “**older women**” is “*presbutidas*,” which is the feminine form of the word normally translated as “**elder**” when it is describing a man. Some believe that these women are not just “**older women**” but “**female elders**” serving in a limited role to other women. This is still argued by scholars as follows.

“There is therefore, no real grounds for regarding either *presbyterai* or *presbytidas* as women elders.”

Gleason L. Archer
“*Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties*”
p. 414

They would have been older since the Jews would not consider someone to be an elder until the age of 60. Older people were looked to for their wisdom in the pagan world as well. Postmenopausal women had much more freedom in the ancient world as well. In Judaism women were considered unclean during their monthly period which disqualified them from religious service during that time of the month.

After menopause women had more freedom in the religious and public spheres. She was no longer considered as unclean, and she was considered wise because of the many years she had lived. We see this with Anna, the prophetess, at the temple in Luke 2:36-38. She lived at the temple worshipping, fasting and praying every day.

These elderly women in Crete are instructed to teach what is good. The word “**teach**” is from “*didaskolos*” which is the word Paul uses to describe teaching the Gospel. The instruction goes on to specifically tell them to train the younger women to love their husbands and children. The young women who were now part of the church had special needs because they had no teaching in morality or how to be wives and mothers.

So Paul encouraged the “older women” to focus their teaching on helping these younger women learn how to cope with all the responsibilities of being a wife and mother in Crete. This teaching probably included how to fend off the charlatans that preyed on them and their families. Paul wanted these young women to know the truth of the Gospel, so they would know when they were being cheated out of their money, and could protect their families from these greedy hucksters.

Other Important Scriptures

We also find “older women” in another of Paul’s letters. In I Timothy 5:1-2 “*presbutiro*” is used for both men and women, and is translated as “*older men*” and “*older women*.” In this section Paul is dealing with the established order of ministry within the church as seen in the instructions for enrolling widows.

In verse 17 the plural form, “*presbutiboi*,” is used of those who preach and teach in the church, and Paul tells Timothy that they are worthy of double honour. There is no reason to believe that this group was comprised only of men, especially since Paul used both the masculine and feminine form of the adjective in the first two verses of chapter 5. **It appears these selected women functioned in the church as the ones who taught the younger women.**

Paul goes on to say . . .

"women will be saved through childbearing – if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety (self-restraint)."

I Timothy 2:15

That verse is not talking about women's eternal destiny, but means that they are saved from being second-class citizens through the privilege of rearing children. God designed a woman to fulfill a role in the home that no man ever can serve in (Proverbs 31:10-31; Titus 2:4-5).

“But she shall be saved [sōthētai from sōzein, which here implies that a woman is saved or redeemed from the disadvantage or reproach of having been the first to succumb to the wiles of Satan’s temptation at the Fall] through childbearing, if they [i.e., childbearing women – or even all women, as potential child-bearers] abide in faith and love and sanctification with sobriety [sōphrosynē, which implies ‘moderation,’ ‘good judgment,’ ‘self-control,’ ‘chastity,’ or ‘self-restraint].” (Sōthētai must not be taken out of context as meaning that a childbearing woman is saved by her good work of bringing a new life into the world; for her it is just as true as it is for a man, that salvation from sin and death is bestowed only by grace through faith, as Ephesians 2:8 – 9 clearly teaches.).

Gleason L. Archer
“Encyclopedia of Bible Difficulties”
p. 411

Our society's current thinking on the woman's role is contrary to the priorities revealed in the Bible. Genesis 3 explains why that conflict still exists. After the Fall, God told the woman,

*"Your **desire** will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."*

Genesis 3:16

Genesis 4:7 helps us to understand what that verse means. There God told Cain,

*"Sin is crouching at your door; and it **desires** to have you, but you must master it."*

Genesis 4:7

Exactly the same word is used in both passages. So in the same way sin tries to dominate us all, fallen women desire to overpower their husbands, and fallen men tend to oppress them in the same way sin oppresses the sinner. The intended balance, of course, is achieved when men and women lead and submit in a godly manner (Ephesians 5:22-33).

The Authority in a Christian Home

*“Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord.
23. For the husband is the head of the wife as
Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which
he is the Savior.
24. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also
wives should submit to their husbands in everything.
25. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved
the church and gave himself up for her
26. to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing
with water through the word,
27. and to present her to himself as a radiant
church, without stain or wrinkle or any other
blemish, but holy and blameless.
28. In this same way, husbands ought to love their
wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife
loves himself.
29. After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he
feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the
church—
30. for we are members of his body.
31. "For this reason a man will leave his father and
mother and be united to his wife, and the two will
become one flesh."
32. This is a profound mystery—but I am talking
about Christ and the church.
33. However, each one of you also must love his
wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect
her husband.”*

Ephesians 5:22-33

The headship within a home does not seem to differ from that within the church. It is clear that the wife is in a subordinate position under the authority of her husband. It is the husband's responsibility to make the ultimate decisions that will affect his home in careful consideration to the rest of his family. He is cautioned to the fact that he cannot usurp authority over his wife in anything that is contrary to his wife's obedience to God's Word.

The spiritual order of a Christian home is that Christ is first in authority (Ephesians 5:23), followed by the husband (Ephesians 5:24) and then the wife and finally the children (Ephesians 6:1). The husband has much more responsibility placed upon him than we see upon his wife. The word used for “*submits*” or “*is subject*” refers to “*someone who is subject to the chain of command by which the whole unit is governed.*”

What About Galatians 3:28?

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus,"

Galatians 3:28

This verse is often used to support the idea that women can hold the offices of elder and pastor because there is neither male nor female in Christ. The argument states that if we are all equal, then women can be pastors.

Unfortunately, those who use this verse this way have failed to read the context. Verse 23 talks about being under the Law "*before faith came*" and how we are now brought closer to Jesus and have become sons of God by faith. We are no longer under law, but grace and we are

"Abraham's seed (offspring), heirs according to the promise,"

Galatians 3:29

The point of this passage is that we are all saved by God's grace according to the promise of God and that it doesn't matter who you are, Jew, Greek, slave, free, male, or female. We all are saved the same way, by grace. In that, there is neither male nor female.

This verse is therefore, not talking about a church's leadership structure. It is talking about our salvation "in Christ." It cannot be used to support women as pastors because that isn't what it is talking about.

Instead, to find out about church structure and leadership, you need to go to those passages that talk about it. Rather than trying to take our stand on arguable issues about what Paul said, let's look at what he *did*. In last chapter of Paul's letter to the Romans he showed that, over time, men and women worked together in serving the needs of the church.

Paul did have a large number of women who helped him in ministry. These included Lydia (acts 16), Phoebe (Romans 16:1 – 2), Eurodia and Syntyche (Philippians 4:2 – 3).

We are also told that Lydia was quite involved with the church at Philippi as Paul's first convert. She promoted evangelism to everyone who entered her home (Acts 16:14, 40). She was a wonderful example of both the gifted and a godly woman who desired to win souls. We are also told that Philip had four unmarried daughters who prophesied (Acts 21:9).

As Paul ended the epistle of Rome he wrote,

*“I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a **servant** of the church in Cenchrea.
2. I ask that you may receive her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and give her any help she may need of you, **for she has been a great help to many people**, including me.
3. **Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus.**
4. They risked their lives for me. Not only I but all the churches of the Gentiles are grateful to them.
5. Greet also the church that meets at their house. Greet my dear friends Epenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in the province of Asia.
6. Greet Mary, who worked very hard for you.
7. Greet Andronicus and **Junias**, my relatives who have been in prison with me. **They are outstanding among the apostles**, and they were in Christ before I was.”*

Romans 16:1-7

According to Arndt and Gingrich’s Greek - English Lexicon, p. 184 the mention that Phoebe was a “**servant**” is the only case in the New testament of a female deacon or one who held the position of a “**deaconess.**” Some try to argue whether Junia was even a woman, and whether Junia was an apostle in a formal sense or rather a “**sent one**” in a general manner like that of a missionary. Whatever the case, she is mentioned along with Andronicus and therefore was not serving in the early church on her own.

The word for “**servant**” is “**diakonos**” which is where we get our word “**deacon**” from (I Timothy 3:8-12; Philippians 1:1). At this time of the history of the church the deacons (or deaconesses) were assigned the ministry of visiting the sick, relief to the poor and in a few cases overseeing the financial affairs of the church. There was a great deal that women could do for other women during this time because the sexes were normally separated.

The word describing her “**great help**” is “**protatis** or “**helper, assistant, patroness, benefactor or protector.**” It referred to Phoebe’s ministry of caring for the needs of others, especially foreigners in providing basic housing and financial help as well as standing with them before local authorities. It was not meaning that she presided over an assembly.

Never does even the masculine form “**prostatēs**” ever mean “**president**” in the New Testament usage but only “**defender,**” “**guardian,**” “**helper**” according to Arndt and Gingrich’s Greek - English Lexicon, p. 726.

“Greet Priscilla and Aquila” - Paul first met them at Corinth on his second missionary journey. They had come from Italy because of Claudius’ expulsion of Jews from Pontus, Rome in AD 49 (Acts 18:2). They also were tent makers (Acts 18:3). They led Apollos into a deeper meaning of God (Acts 18:26). It was clearly shown that it gave Apollos the incentive to debate with the Jews in proving that Jesus was their Messiah (Acts 18:28). They joined with Paul in Ephesus later for a longer ministry time (I Corinthians 16:19). They probably returned to Rome after the death of Emperor Claudius (October, AD. 54). Paul also mentions them at the end of his ministry (II Timothy 4:19).

“Greet Andronicus and Junias” - ***“Andronicus”*** is believed to be a Hellenistic Jew. ***“Junias”*** or ***“Junia”*** is most likely the wife of ***“Andronicus.”***

“They are outstanding among the apostles” - Many argue that Junias could not have been a woman because ***“they”*** were noted as outstanding apostles. Yet the word ***“apostles”*** can often be used in its broader term denoting a ***“messenger”*** or ***“emissary”*** or even most likely a ***“commissioned missionary.”***

You’ll notice that Priscilla was mentioned before her husband. She likely was born into a prominent Roman family while Aquila was from a Jewish family that lived around Pontus.

What About a Missionary Woman Who Establishes a Church?

Many have found it hard to understand why women can serve as missionaries but not be recognized as elders. Those who serve as missionaries are involved in preaching, teaching, marital counselling, baby dedications, weddings, funerals (and the list goes on). In other words, they do the same work as a pastor yet with the difference of being involved in a cross-cultural ministry.

So, what about the situation where a woman missionary has converted a group of people and she has established a church? In that church, she is then functioning as a pastor and teacher having authority over men in the church. Should she not do this?

First of all, she should not be out there alone. She should be with her husband or, at the very least, under the oversight of a church body in the presence of other men and women. Missionary work is not a lone endeavour to be handled by single women.

Second, if in some highly unusual set of circumstances there is a woman in a lone situation, it is far more important that the Word of God be preached and the gospel of salvation to go forth to the lost than not. Whether it is male or female, let the gospel be spoken. However, as soon as there is/are males mature enough to handle eldership, she should then establish the proper order of the church as revealed in scripture and thereby, show her submission to it.

“The modern cult of personality makes submission a degrading thing. We are told that we cannot be “whole persons” if we submit. Obedience is thought of as restrictive and therefore bad. “Freedom” is defined as the absence of restraint, quite the opposite from the scriptural principle embodied in Jesus’ words, “If you continue in my words, then are ye my disciples, and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” Freedom in God’s view always lies on the far side of discipline, which means obedience . . . To attempt to apply democratic ideals to the kingdom of God, which is clearly hierarchical, can result only in a loss of power and ultimately in destruction. Christ Himself, the Servant and Son, accepted limitation and restriction. He subjected Himself. He learned obedience.”

Elizabeth Elliot
“Why I Oppose the Ordination of Women”
Christianity today
1975, page 13

“Together with so many others, I’m forced to conclude that when principles of historical, grammatical interpretation are carefully used the issue remains unresolved with people on both sides. In other words when every effort is made to determine what the biblical text meant in the time and place in which it was written, and when every attempt is made to do justice to the inspired words that were chosen, it seems that the text is open not only to legitimate issues of interpretation, but also differences of application.”

Mart De Haan
December 4th, 2008

Conclusion

We will not try to nullify the Word of God and yet we do need to be careful at how we apply the Word. Willful manipulation of the clear teachings of the Scriptures is just as serious as denying the truth found within its pages. The key seems to lie in the fact that there is a clear limitation set throughout Scripture that women are never to have authority over men.

Women do seem to have opportunities for leadership within the local church in the New Testament. They have served alongside of their husbands in both the teaching and preaching ministries. They were also recognized as part of the leadership team by the apostle Paul. The area that seems to be questionable is whether or not they can serve as **A FINAL AUTHORITY**. Since the Scriptures do not allow for this, we will also make this our standard.

Each elder of this church will be selected by the men who qualify. They must be men who never overstep the limitations set within the boundaries of the written Word of God. We will work with an eldership team at all times.

Our Board of Directors will consist of men and women who will serve as part of our leadership team. The women will serve in a role that consists of ministering to the women and children. If they do minister to men we will have them serve either alongside their husband or with a male elder as agreed to by their husband (if married).

Our Ministry Leaders will consist of both men and women to serve in the area of ministry that they are specifically chosen to serve in (Altar; Care/Benevolent; Children's; College and Career; Financial; Library; Men's Missions; Music; Photography; Seniors; Social Events; Women's; Youth etc).