



MEN
&
WOMEN
IN MINISTRY

.....
COMPLEMENTARIANISM
AT BRIDGEWAY
.....

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Men and Women in Ministry: Complementarianism at Bridgeway

Sam Storms

Who Believes What?

There's simply no way to escape the fact that the question of women in ministry and leadership and the way male and female relate to each other in both the home and church is an issue of considerable controversy and importance. Bridgeway's position on this issue is known as *Complementarianism*. It is briefly summarized in article 12 of our Statement of Faith.

12. We believe that both men and women are together created in the divine image and are therefore equal before God as persons, possessing the same moral dignity and value, and have equal access to God through faith in Christ. We also believe that men and women are together the recipients of spiritual gifts designed to equip and empower them for ministry in the local church and beyond. We also believe that God has ordained the principle of male headship in both the home and in the local church and that certain governing and teaching roles are restricted to men (primarily the office of Elder) (Genesis 1:26-27; 2:18; 1 Corinthians 11:2-16; Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Timothy 2:11-15; 3:1-7; 1 Peter 3:1-7).

What I propose to do in this booklet is to demonstrate that this is the position most consistent with Scripture. What follows is by no means an exhaustive treatment of every biblical passage or related issue. It is, rather, a summary of the more important questions in this debate.

What grieves me almost as much as the theological differences between Egalitarians and Complementarians is the inexcusable disdain with which each side treats and speaks of the other. May I begin with a plea for Christian civility in our discussion with one another? May I suggest that we expend every effort to portray the other side in the best possible terms, and that we avoid caricature, sarcasm, and misrepresentation? May I suggest that we respectfully disagree with each other without calling into question the other's orthodoxy or love for God? May I ask that we commit ourselves to the sort of dialogue that will honor Christ and enhance rather than tarnish the image of the church in a society that already regards us as our own worst enemy?

All too often we make the mistake of thinking that someone is launching a personal attack under the guise of a hermeneutical decision. In other words, we tend to react to another's approach to biblical interpretation as if they embrace that interpretation because they don't like us or think that we are inferior or have some grudge against us that is best vented by endorsing a contrary position on a controversial topic like the relationship of men and women. I hope that such is not the case, but if it is, I ask that we together commit ourselves to forsaking it.

I'm not suggesting or asking that anyone embrace and articulate his/her beliefs with any less intensity of conviction than you feel is warranted by Scripture. In other words, my suggestions are not designed to invalidate or undermine fervent and heartfelt interaction. I'm just asking that we speak the truth, however we conceive that truth, in genuine love.

Are there Complementarians whose primary motivation is self-serving, who insist upon male headship in church and home as a way of compensating for their own insecurity and holding on to the power and resources of the church? Yes. Tragically. Are there Egalitarians whose commitment is driven by a radical feminist political agenda and who bristle with resentment at the mere thought that men and women, by God's design, may be different? Yes. Tragically.

I'm not so naïve as to think that none of us is tainted by unbiblical and self-serving motives. I'm simply calling for mutual generosity and patience as we together explore God's best for those created in his image.

Foundational Principles

Let me begin by articulating five foundational principles that must govern all dialogue on this topic, and then provide a brief summary of Complementarian beliefs.

- (1) Both Complementarians and Egalitarians agree that men and women are equally created in the image of God, and that neither is more or less the image of God than the other.
- (2) Both Complementarians and Egalitarians agree that men and women are equal in personal dignity, that neither is more or less worthy or of more or less value as human beings.
- (3) Both Complementarians and Egalitarians agree that men and women should treat each other with kindness and compassion and love, and that any and all forms of abuse or disrespect or dishonor must be denounced as sin and resisted.
- (4) Both Complementarians and Egalitarians believe that women should be actively involved in ministry. Complementarians agree with Egalitarians and celebrate the fact that women, for example, served as "co-workers" with Paul and held the office of deacon.
- (5) Where Complementarians and Egalitarians disagree is whether women can serve as the Senior Pastor or as a Ruling Elder in the local church, what I call senior governmental authority. Egalitarians believe the Bible permits women to hold such positions of leadership, while Complementarians do not.

I should point out that some would broaden this debate to whether or not women should be involved in any form of ministry, whether that be the leading of worship or personal evangelism or church planting or celebrating the sacraments. You should know from the start where I stand on such matters.

I am extremely reluctant to place restrictions on anyone of either gender or any age in the absence of explicit biblical instruction to that effect. In other words, if I am going to err, it is on the side of freedom. In my opinion, the only restrictions placed on women concern what I call *senior governmental authority in the local church*. I have in mind, as noted above, (1) the primary authority to expound the Scriptures and enforce their doctrinal and ethical truths on the conscience of all God's people, and (2) the authority to exercise final governmental oversight of the body of Christ.

Therefore, unlike a number of other Complementarians, as long as the principle of male headship is honored in the above two respects, I believe women can lead worship, can assist in the celebration of both baptism and the Lord's Supper, can serve as deacons (or deaconesses), can chair church committees, can lead in evangelistic and church planting outreach, can (and should) be consulted by the local church Eldership when decisions are being made, and can contribute to virtually every other capacity of local church life. Women should be encouraged to pray and prophesy in corporate church meetings (1 Cor. 11) and should be given every opportunity to develop and exercise their spiritual gifts.

So, when I ask and answer the question below: "What do Complementarians believe?" you should understand that I am speaking only for myself. Although I rely heavily on the work of such well-known and widely-published Complementarians as Wayne Grudem, Bruce Ware, and John Piper, one should not immediately assume that I am representing their convictions or that they are responsible for everything I believe or the way in which I make practical application to life in the home and the church.

What do Complementarians believe?

Complementarianism asserts that God has created both men and women (1) in his image, of equal value and dignity as human persons, but (2) with a distinction in the roles and responsibilities each is to fulfill in both church and home.

Complementarianism asserts that (1) and (2) above are perfectly and practically compatible with each other. Complementarianism asserts that *functional differences* between men and women in church and home, as expressed in the biblical terms “headship” and “submission”, do not diminish or jeopardize their *ontological equality*.

Complementarianism believes that submission to rightful authority, whether wives to husbands or children to parents or Christians to elders in the church or all citizens to the state is a noble and virtuous thing, that it is a privilege, a joy, something good and desirable and consistent with true freedom, and above all honoring and glorifying to God.

In the discussion that follows, I will provide brief explanations of why I believe what I do. I will also try to respond to a number of objections that Egalitarians have brought against this view, as well as address the more difficult and controversial texts that come up in the course of this debate.

The Meaning of Headship

There is a sense in which I address this issue with a measure of reluctance and hesitation. It isn't because I'm in doubt about what Scripture says on the subject or because I'm uncertain about my own beliefs. It has to do with the widespread misunderstandings about headship and submission.

Many think that headship and submission mean that a wife must sit passively and endure the sin or the abuse of the husband, as if submission means she has no right to stand up for what is true and good or to resist her husband's evil ways. Perhaps some of you come from families in which the husband was an insensitive bully and where it was assumed that it was the wife's “duty” to tolerate this silently. God's Word does not call upon a wife to acquiesce to brutality or thievery or abuse.

Some of you may think that a husband can get away with whatever he wants in the name of headship, as if that word or concept endorses and encourages his sinful behavior, such that the wife has no recourse but to “submit” to his dictatorial and destructive ways. I (and I trust, all Complementarians) utterly reject and grieve over such a terrible distortion and misapplication of the principles addressed in this study.

I know that there are both men and women who look at someone like me or other Complementarians and say to themselves, or perhaps even say to others, “My dad is a mean and abusive bully who belittles my mom and ignores her needs and those Complementarians hold to a view that says that's ok or that there's nothing she can do but quietly ‘submit’ and put up with it; after all, he's the head of the house.”

It's hard not to be offended by such a horrible distortion of the truth. I assure you of this one thing: that is **not** biblical headship; that is **not** biblical submission.

On more than one occasion I've had women tell me horrible stories of neglect, tyranny, abuse, abandonment, and even adultery on the part of the man, the husband, and then say: “How could you possibly embrace Complementarianism, a view that permits and perhaps even encourages such sinful behavior.” Let it be said once and for all: I don't! Can Complementarianism and the notion of male headship be perverted and distorted by selfishness and sinful oppression? Yes. Even as Egalitarianism and the denial of male headship can be perverted and distorted into a rejection of any differences between male and female.

My prayer is that if nothing else is accomplished in this study, perhaps I may be of some help in clarifying the meaning of these ideas and how they actually work within a marriage.

A good place to begin is with the meaning of marriage (Gen. 2:24; Mt. 19:5; Mark 10:7-8; Eph. 5:31). I would define marriage as ***the enjoyment of spiritual and physical unity based on a life-long, covenant commitment.***

Marriage is a unity of both *flesh* and *spirit*. It is a mutual commitment in which husband and wife share their bodies, their spirits, their possessions, their problems, their insights and ideas, their goals and gripes, their sadness and happiness. Ideally, nothing should stand in the way of this mutual experience. As Wayne Mack explains:

"The wife promises that she will be faithful even if the husband is afflicted with bulges, baldness, bunions, and bifocals; even if he loses his health, his wealth, his job, his charm; even if someone more exciting comes along. The husband promises to be faithful even if the wife loses her beauty and appeal; even if she is not as neat and tidy or as submissive as he would like her to be; even if she does not satisfy his sexual desires completely; even if she spends money foolishly or is a terrible cook. Marriage means that a husband and wife enter into a relationship for which they accept full responsibility and in which they commit themselves to each other regardless of what problems arise."

In order for true, biblical unity to occur, both husband and wife must understand what the Bible means by *headship* and *submission*. The failure to appreciate these truths has contributed immeasurably to *disunity* and eventual *dissolution* of countless marriages.

Headship

"Headship" (*kephale*) has three meanings in Scripture: (1) a physical head (1 Cor. 11:7); (2) source or origin (Col. 1:18); and (3) a person with authority (Eph. 1:22).

A. Misconceptions about the Nature of Headship

1. *Husbands are never commanded to rule their wives, but to love them.* The Bible never says, "Husbands, take steps to insure that your wives submit to you." Nor does it say, "Husbands, exercise headship and authority over your wives." Rather, the principle of male headship is either asserted or assumed and men are commanded to love their wives as Christ loves the church.
2. *Headship is never portrayed in Scripture as a means for self-satisfaction or self-exaltation. Headship is always other-oriented.* I can't think of a more horrendous sin than exploiting the God-given responsibility to lovingly lead by perverting it into justification for using one's wife and family to satisfy one's lusts and thirst for power.
3. *Headship is not the power of a superior over an inferior. Human nature is sinfully inclined to distort the submission of the wife into the superiority of the husband.* That some, in the name of male headship, have done precisely this cannot be denied, but it must certainly be denounced. We must also remember that the abuse of headship is not sufficient justification for abandoning it. Rather, we must strive, in God's grace, to redeem it and purify it in a way that honors both Christ and one's spouse.
4. *Headship is never to be identified with the issuing of commands.*
5. *Headship does not mean that the husband must make every decision in the home.* Unfortunately, some men have mistakenly assumed that it undermines their authority for their wives to take the initiative in certain domestic matters. This is more an expression of masculine insecurity and fear than it is godly leadership.

B. Identifying the Essence of Headship

1. *Headship is more a responsibility than a right.* A “right” is something we tend to demand or insist upon as something we are owed. This can all too often make for an authoritarian and self-serving atmosphere in the home. When headship is viewed as a sacred trust in which the husband is “called” by God to lead and honor and sacrifice for his wife, the tone and mood of the home is radically improved.

2. *Headship is the authority to serve.* John Stott explains:

"If headship means 'power' in any sense, then it is power to care, not to crush; power to serve, not to dominate; power to facilitate self-fulfillment, not to frustrate or destroy it. And in all this the standard of the husband's love is to be the cross of Christ, on which he surrendered himself even to death in his selfless love for his bride" (232).

3. *Headship is the opportunity to lead.* If Jesus is our example of biblical leadership, it will help to take note of how he led his disciples.

- Jesus led by *teaching* his disciples (cf. 1 Cor. 14:35)
- Jesus led by setting an *example* for his disciples (John 13:15)
- Jesus led by spending *time* with his disciples (Acts 4:13)
- Jesus led by *delegating authority* to his disciples (Luke 10:1-20)

4. *Headship is Scripturally circumscribed. Husbands have never been given the authority to lead their families in ways that are contrary to the Bible.* On a related note, if a wife is ever asked or told by her husband to do something that violates Scripture, she is not only free to disobey him, she is obligated to do so.

5. *Headship does entail the responsibility to make a final decision when agreement cannot be reached. This final decision, however, may on occasion be to let his wife decide.* No, contrary to what you may think, this latter option does not undermine the husband’s authority.

6. *Headship entails gentleness and sensitivity.* See Col. 3:18-19 where Paul exhorts husbands not to be "embittered" against their wives. The idea is that of "friction caused by impatience and thoughtless nagging" (Moule).

7. *Headship does not give men the right to be wrong.* Simply because God has invested in the husband the authority to lead does not give him the freedom to lead in ways that are contrary to God’s Word.

8. *Headship means honoring one's wife.* See 1 Peter 3:7.

9. *Headship means loving and caring for one's wife as much as we love and care for ourselves.* See Eph. 5:28-29.

10. *Headship means loving and caring for one's wife as much as Christ loves and cares for us.* See Eph. 5:25-27. Christ's love for us has several characteristics:

- It is **unconditional** (Rom. 5:8)
- It is **eternal** (Rom. 8:39)
- It is **unselfish** (Phil. 2:6-7)
- It is **purposeful** (Eph. 5:26-27)

"Christ 'loved' the church and 'gave himself' for her, in order to 'cleanse' her, 'sanctify' her, and ultimately 'present' her to himself in full splendour and without any defect. In other words, his love and self-sacrifice were not an idle display, but purposive. And his purpose was not to impose an alien identity upon the church, but to free her from the spots and wrinkles which mar her beauty

and to display her in her true glory. The Christian husband is to have a similar concern. His headship will never be used to suppress his wife. He longs to see her liberated from everything which spoils her true feminine identity and growing towards that 'glory', that perfection of fulfilled personhood which will be the final destiny of all those whom Christ redeems. To this end Christ gave himself. To this end too the husband gives himself in love" (Stott).

- It is **sacrificial** (Eph. 5:25)
- It is **demonstrative** (Rom. 5:6-8)

The way Jesus related to women in general is a model for all men:

"They [women] had never known a man like this Man – there never has been such another. A prophet and teacher who never nagged at them, never flattered or coaxed or patronized; who never made jokes about them, never treated them either as 'The women, God help us!' or 'The ladies, God bless them!'; who rebuked without querulousness and praised without condescension; who took their questions and arguments seriously; who never mapped out their sphere for them, never urged them to be feminine or jeered at them for being female; who had no axe to grind and no uneasy male dignity to defend; who took them as he found them and was completely unself-conscious. There is no act, no sermon, no parable in the whole Gospel that borrows its pungency from female perversity; nobody could possibly guess from the words and deeds of Jesus that there was anything 'funny' about women's nature" (Dorothy Sayers).

The Meaning of Submission

"Submission" (Gk., *hupotasso*) carries the implication of voluntary yieldedness to a recognized authority. Biblical submission is appropriate in several relational spheres: (1) the wife to her husband (Eph. 5:22-24); (2) children to their parents (Eph. 6:1); (3) believers to the elders of the church (Heb. 13:17; 1 Thess. 5:12); (4) citizens to the state (Rom. 13); (5) servants (employees) to their masters (employers) (1 Pt. 2:18); (6) each believer to every other believer in humble service (Eph. 5:21).

A. Misconceptions about the Nature of Submission

1. *Submission is not grounded in any supposed superiority of the husband or inferiority of the wife.* See Gal. 3:28; 1 Pt. 3:7.

The concept of the wife being the "helper" (Gen. 2:18-22) of the husband in no way implies her inferiority. In fact, the Hebrew word translated "helper" is often used in the OT to refer to *God* as the "helper" of mankind. Surely *HE* is not inferior to us! Rather, this passage means that (1) the husband, even before the fall into sin, was *incomplete* without his wife; (2) the husband will never reach his full potential apart from the input of his wife.

2. *Submission does not mean a wife is obligated to follow should her husband lead her into sin.*

The biblical principle that we owe obedience to God first and foremost applies to Christian wives as well. If there must be a choice between obedience to God and obedience to the state, God is to be obeyed (Acts 5:29). The same would apply in a marriage. However, as Susan Foh has pointed out,

"This qualification of the 'traditional' concept of wifely submission does not mean that the wife has an excuse to follow her 'better judgment' when she disagrees with her husband. The wife's submission to her husband is qualified by God's commands, not her own preferences, opinions, or even expertise."

3. *Submission does not mean the wife must sacrifice her freedom.*

4. *Submission does not entail passivity.* See Prov. 31. Note especially the emphasis on her initiative, creativity, tireless industry, etc. There is no biblically prescribed “personality” for wives, anymore than there is one for husbands. **Husbands who exercise godly leadership can be introverts and wives who submit can be extroverts.**

5. *Submission does not entail silence.*

Many mistakenly think a wife is unsubmitive if she ever:

criticizes her husband (constructive criticism that is lovingly motivated and corrective in nature is not inconsistent with godly submission)

makes requests of her husband (in particular, that her husband and family act responsibly in private and public; submission of the wife is not an excuse for sin or sloth or sloppiness in the husband)

teaches her husband (cf. Prov. 31:26; Acts 18:26; it is not inconsistent with godly submission that a wife be more intelligent or more articulate than her husband; on a personal note, I’ve probably learned more from my wife than from any other living soul)

6. *Submission does not mean that everything a wife does must be directly dependent upon or connected to her husband.*

Submission does not mean the wife can never do anything for her own benefit or for the benefit of others or that she should never become involved in activities or ministries outside the home. See Prov. 31. "It does mean, however, that she ought never to do anything which would be detrimental or harmful to her husband or that would cause her to neglect her primary ministry of helping her husband [Prov. 31:12]" (Wayne Mack).

B. **Identifying the Essence of Submission**

1. *Submission is the disposition to honor and affirm a husband's authority and an inclination to yield to his leadership.* John Piper puts it this way:

"[Submission] is an attitude that says, 'I delight for you to take the initiative in our family. I am glad when you take responsibility for things and lead with love. I don't flourish when you are passive and I have to make sure the family works.' But the attitude of Christian submission also says, 'It grieves me when you venture into sinful acts and want to take me with you. You know I can't do that. I have no desire to resist you. On the contrary, I flourish most when I can respond creatively and joyfully to your lead; but I can't follow you into sin, as much as I love to honor your leadership in our marriage. Christ is my King.'"

2. *Submission is fundamentally an attitude and act of obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ.* See Eph. 5:22.

3. *Submission is a commitment to support one's husband in such a way that he may reach his full potential as a man of God.* This may involve several things:

- making the home a safe place, free from the sinful influence of the world
- striving to be dependable and trustworthy (Prov. 31:11-12)
- providing affirmation and encouragement

- building loyalty to him in the children (differences of opinion about discipline should be settled in private, away from the children, lest she be seen as taking sides against her husband)
- showing confidence in his decisions

C. **Submission when the Husband is an Unbeliever**

See 1 Peter 3:1-7.

1. *Submission does not mean she must agree with everything her husband says.*

1 Peter 3:1 indicates that she is a believer and he is not. Thus she disagrees with him on the most important principle of all: God! Her interpretation of ultimate reality may well be utterly different from his.

This indicates that submission is perfectly compatible with independent thinking. The woman in this passage has heard the gospel, assessed the claims of Christ, and embraced his atoning work as her only hope. Her husband has likewise heard the gospel and "disobeyed" it. "She thought for herself and she acted. And Peter does not tell her to retreat from that commitment" (Piper).

2. *Submission does not mean giving up all efforts to change her husband.*

The point of the passage is to tell a wife how she might "win" her husband to the Lord. Strangely enough, Peter envisions submission as the most effective strategy in *changing* the husband.

3. *Submission does not mean putting the will of one's husband above the will of the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Peter in no way suggests she should abandon her commitment to Christ simply because her husband is an unbeliever. This wife is a follower of Jesus before and above being a follower of her husband.

4. *Submission to an unbelieving husband does not mean a wife gets her personal, spiritual strength from him.*

When a husband's spiritual nurturing and leadership is lacking, a Christian wife is not left helpless. She is to be nurtured and strengthened by her hope in God (v. 5).

5. *Submission to an unbelieving husband is not to be done in fear but in freedom.* See v. 6b.

Does the New Testament teach "Mutual Submission"? Seven Objections to the Egalitarian understanding of Mutual Submission in Ephesians 5:21-33

[For a more in-depth treatment of this passage and the issues surrounding it, see Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth* (Multnomah, 2004).]

One of the principal arguments of Egalitarians is that whatever submission exists in a marriage relationship is to be **mutual**, not only wives to husbands but also, and equally, husbands to wives. This interpretation is based on a certain reading of Ephesians 5:20ff.

“giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,
²¹ **submitting to one another** out of reverence for Christ. ²² Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. ²³ For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church,

his body, and is himself its Savior.²⁴ Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands.”

There are several reasons why I find this interpretation inadequate.

1. The context of Eph. 5 specifies the kind of submission Paul had in mind: wives to husbands (5:22-23), children to their parents (6:1-3), bondservants to their masters (6:5-8). These relationships are never reversed.

Ephesians 5:24 makes clear that the kind of submission wives are to exercise is like the submission of the church to Christ. The latter is not mutual submission. The church is submissive to Christ’s authority in a way that Christ cannot and never will be submissive to us.

2. We should also be aware of the absence of any command that husbands be submissive to their wives. While wives are often told to submit to their husbands (Eph. 5:22-24; Col. 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Pt. 3:1-6), the situation is never reversed. If mutual submission were so essential to Paul’s or Peter’s or John’s view of the marital relationship, it is stunning that neither they nor any other biblical author explicitly or directly instructs husbands to submit to their wives

3. The word “submit” or “be subject to” (*hypotasso*) is always used for submission to an authority. e.g., Luke 2:51; 10:17; Rom. 13:1,5; 1 Cor. 15:27-28; 1 Pt. 3:22; 5:5; Eph. 5:24; Titus 2:9; 1 Pt. 2:18; Heb. 12:9; James 4:7. The submission is always one-directional.

4. No one has produced an example in ancient Greek literature where *hypotasso* (“submit”) is applied to a relationship between persons and it does not bear the sense of “be subject / submissive to” an authority.

5. The word translated “one another” (*allelous*) in Eph. 5:21 need not mean “everyone to everyone” but often means “some to others”. See, e.g., Rev. 6:4; Gal. 6:2; 1 Cor. 11:33; Matt. 24:10; Luke 2:15; 12:1; 24:32). In this case it would be wives to husbands, as Eph. 5:22 makes explicitly clear.

6. In other texts where wives are exhorted to be submissive to their husbands, nothing is said about submitting to one another. See Col. 3:18; Titus 2:5; 1 Peter 3:1.

7. Even if Paul meant complete reciprocity (wives to husbands and husbands to wives), this doesn’t mean husbands and wives submit to each other in the same way. Their “mutual submission” would be expressed in ways consistent with their distinctive roles and without compromising the headship of the husband.

After reading this material I encourage both men and women, but especially the men, to go back to what I wrote on headship and submission and carefully read it once again. It is all too easy, given our depraved proclivity for self-aggrandizement, to use the truths as a way of rationalizing a dictatorial and unkind and insensitive way of relating to our wives.

Ten Reasons why Male Headship Existed before the Fall

[I am dependent for the following, in large measure, on Wayne Grudem’s treatment of this issue in his chapter, “The Key Issues in the Manhood-Womanhood Controversy, and the Way Forward,” in *Biblical Foundations for Manhood and Womanhood*, edited by Wayne Grudem (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2002), 19-68.]

Perhaps the most important argument put forth by Egalitarians is that the responsibilities of headship and submission in marriage were not part of the original creation but were imposed upon the race as part of the curse, consequent on human sin. They contend that since Christ came to redeem us from the curse and to reverse the effects of the fall, headship and submission should be abandoned. In other words, most

egalitarians argue that Paul's discussion in Ephesians 5 and 1 Timothy 2 and Peter's discussion in 1 Peter 3 and other similar texts do **not** reflect **God's original design** for how men and women are to relate to each other either in the home or in the church. Male headship and female submission, they argue, were **imposed** on the race subsequent to and consequent upon Adam's transgression. In Christ, and by virtue of the redemptive grace of the New Covenant, we are to strive to move beyond such distinctions in role and renew God's egalitarian design for all people.

In the following I list 10 reasons why it is far more probable that male headship was part of God's original design in the created order. That is to say, the evidence from Genesis 1-2 indicates that male headship preceded the Fall into sin. Sin, therefore, undoubtedly distorts the male-female relationship and leads both parties to pervert their God-given responsibilities. **But sin is not the cause of male headship.** The latter is not the penalty imposed on the race because of the former.

1. Adam was created first, then Eve (Gen. 2:7,18-23). See 1 Tim. 2:12-13; 1 Cor. 11:8. Note especially the text in Timothy and Corinthians where Paul grounds his exhortation concerning the male-female relationship in the order of creation. He could easily have linked it to the Fall, but does not. He explicitly links it with the original creation of male and female in the image of God.
2. Adam, not Eve, was the representative head of the human race. See 1 Cor. 15:22,45-49; Rom. 5:12ff.
3. God spoke first to Adam after the fall, suggesting that he was the one primarily accountable for what had happened (Gen. 3:9).
4. Adam named Eve (Gen. 2:23; cf. Gen. 1:5,8,10; 2:19,20,23).
5. God named the human race "man", not "woman" (Gen. 5:1-2; cf. Gen. 1:27).
6. Eve was created as a helper for Adam, not Adam as a helper for Eve (Gen. 2:18; cf. 1 Cor. 11:8-9).
7. The curse brought a distortion of previous roles, not the introduction of new ones (Gen. 3:16; cf. Gen. 4:7).

One aspect of the curse was the imposition of pain on Adam's particular area of responsibility (Gen. 3:17-19).

A second aspect of the curse was the imposition of pain on Eve's particular area of responsibility, namely, childbirth (Gen. 3:16).

Another aspect of the curse was the introduction of pain and conflict into the relationship between Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:16).

8. The salvation that comes with Christ in the New Testament reaffirms the creation order (Col. 3:18-19). Nothing in the NT suggests that male headship has been reversed by the work of Christ or that it cannot co-exist with full moral and spiritual equality between men and women.
9. From the beginning marriage was a picture of the relationship between Christ and the Church (Eph. 5:31-32, citing Gen. 2:24).
10. We should also take note of the parallel between the relationship within the Godhead (Trinity) and the relationship between men and women (1 Cor. 11:3). Male headship is likened to the headship of the Father over the Son.

Once again, these are but summary statements that need elaboration. I encourage you to read Grudem's extensive defense of each point in the two books I noted.

***Five Crucial Questions about
1 Timothy 2:11-15***

“¹¹ Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. ¹² I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet. ¹³ For Adam was formed first, then Eve; ¹⁴ and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. ¹⁵ Yet she will be saved through childbearing- if they continue in faith and love and holiness, with self-control” (ESV).

This is undoubtedly the most important and controversial passage in either testament on the subject of women in ministry. On first reading it would appear that Paul restricts the exercise of governmental authority in the church, as well as the responsibility to teach, to men. Egalitarians, however, have objected, by asking five questions (or by posing five objections).

First, in this passage, was Paul merely prohibiting uneducated women from teaching men? No.

1. The text nowhere gives this as the reason for the prohibition. The reason is stated in vv. 13-14. It is unwise to ignore the reason that is given in order to supply one that isn't.
2. If this were the reason for the prohibition, Paul could easily have said: “I do not permit uneducated women to teach or to exercise authority over men.”
3. Since Paul prohibits **all** women from teaching men, the egalitarian view must assume that **all** the women in Ephesus were uneducated. But we know this isn't the case, as the example of Priscilla (in 2 Tim. 4:19; Acts 18:24-28) would indicate. In fact, recent research (by S. M. Baugh) has shown that it is not the case that all women in Ephesus were uneducated.
4. If the problem was uneducated women, why would Paul forbid them from teaching men but allow them to teach women and other children?
5. Why would Paul only prohibit uneducated women from teaching and not also **uneducated men**? If the lack of education was the principal obstacle to teaching then Paul should have extended the prohibition to both genders. Uneducated men would, in that case, be as unqualified as uneducated women.

Second, was Paul merely prohibiting women from teaching false doctrine or heresy at Ephesus? No.

1. Once again, this is nowhere stated in the text. The reason **is** stated in vv. 13-14.
2. The grammar requires that the actions (“teaching” and “exercising authority”) be regarded as either both negative or both positive. Recent research (see below) has shown that “exercise authority” is positive in thrust. Thus, so also is “teaching”.
3. If Paul had meant false teaching, it would have been quite easy for him to say so. He had a word that means precisely that. See 1 Tim. 1:3-4; 6:3 for the use of *heterodidaskalein*.
4. The verb “to teach” is almost always used positively in the Pastoral Epistles (1 Tim. 4:11; 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:2). The only exception is Titus 1:11 where the context makes it clear that false teaching is in view.
5. There is no evidence that the women in Ephesus were “teaching” false doctrine. Women are portrayed as being influenced by the heresy (1 Tim. 5:11-15; 2 Tim. 3:5-9) but not as teaching it.
6. The only false teachers specifically named in Ephesus were **men** (1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17-18; cf. 2 Tim. 4:14). Why then didn't Paul prohibit the men from teaching?

7. If Paul's prohibition was provoked by **some** women teaching heresy in Ephesus, why did he prohibit **all** women and **only** women from teaching?

8. It is true that some women were gossiping at Ephesus (1 Tim. 5:13), but that is not the same as teaching false doctrine. We all know people who gossip but who don't teach false doctrine.

9. There were pagan religions in Ephesus where non-Christian men and women did a number of things that were not done by Christians. But to say that they did such things after becoming Christians is mere speculation, not evidence.

10. None of the above is meant to suggest that no woman anywhere in the ancient world ever taught false doctrine. There was false teaching by a woman named Jezebel in a different city, Thyatira, at a later time period (Rev. 2:20), but that is not this time period and that is not this city. Jezebel shows the possibility of women teaching false doctrine, but many things are possible that never happen. As things stand, there is no evidence in Ephesus that this possibility was anything but that.

Third, isn't it possible that the Greek word "authentain" (translated "exercise authority" by the ESV) means "to domineer" or "misuse authority", or perhaps "to commit murder" or "to commit violence", or perhaps "to proclaim oneself the author of a man"?

These are among the more common suggestions put forth by egalitarians to avoid concluding that Paul prohibits women from exercising legitimate spiritual authority over men in the local church. My response will be a brief summation of Grudem's more extensive argument (pp. 304-322).

1. H. Scott Baldwin recently published the most extensive study of this word in which he examined every instance (82x) of its occurrence in ancient literature and papyrus manuscripts. He discovered that during the time of the New Testament the word is **never** used in any of the negative senses suggested in the question above.

2. Baldwin demonstrates that there is no example of *authentain* meaning "to murder" until the tenth century a.d., more than nine hundred years after the writing of the New Testament (and even that 10th century example is open to debate).

3. There is evidence that the **noun** *authentēs* (**not the verb**, which is what we find in 1 Timothy 2) could mean either "master, one who has authority," or "murderer". But these two senses of *authentēs* probably have come from two different linguistic sources. In other words, the noun *authentēs* "probably represents two different words that happen to be spelled the same way" (Grudem, 310).

Let's assume, contrary to the evidence, that Paul used the verb to mean "to commit murder." If so, we are being asked to believe that Paul said, "I do not permit a woman to murder a man," as if to suggest that a woman murdering **another woman** is o.k.? Are we to believe that it was permissible for a man to murder either a man or woman? Who in the NT church would ever have argued that it was permissible for a woman to murder a man? Such a view of the verb in question renders Paul's statement either utterly outrageous or utterly banal. "So, Paul, you're telling us that Christian women can't murder Christian men? Duh!"

4. The same arguments cited above weigh against the suggested translation, "to instigate" or "commit violence."

5. Richard and Catherine Kroeger, well-known Egalitarians, have argued that *authentain* means "to proclaim oneself the author of a man." But none of the eighty-two examples of the verb have this meaning. The notion of "proclaiming" oneself anything is nowhere to be found. The bottom line is that "the Kroegers have produced no ancient texts that require this meaning. The meaning has been universally rejected by modern lexicographers as a mistake, since it is not found as even a possibility in any Greek lexicon for the

last one hundred years. It is a meaning without support in any ancient text or any modern lexicon” (Grudem, 313).

6. Andreas Kostenberger conducted research on the fifty-two other instances in the New Testament (as well as forty-eight extra-biblical examples) of the grammatical construction in 1 Timothy 2:12 and discovered that all of them fall into only two patterns:

(1) Pattern One – two activities or concepts are viewed *positively* in and of themselves; (2) Pattern Two – two activities or concepts are viewed *negatively*.

There are no exceptions to this. This means that if the activity of “teaching” is found to be positive, so also must the activity of “exercising authority”. As I noted above, in the Pastoral Epistles Paul consistently refers to “teaching” in a positive sense (unless made explicit by the context, such as in Titus 1:11), thus making it highly unlikely, if not impossible, for *authentain* to mean something like “usurp authority” or “domineer” or “misuse authority”.

Fourth, doesn’t Paul’s use of the present tense suggest that this was a temporary command, restricted to the early church?

The argument here is that Paul’s statement, “I do not permit,” has a present tense verb in Greek. Perhaps we should then translate it, “I am not *now currently* permitting a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man.” Once the temporary and unusual circumstances in ancient Ephesus that provoked the apostle’s words have passed, the command no longer applies.

1. But Paul quite often uses the present tense in commands that are clearly applicable for all time. See, for example, 1 Timothy 2:1 (“I urge”), Romans 12:1 (“I appeal”), as well as 1 Corinthians 4:16; Ephesians 4:1; Titus 3:8; just to mention a few.
2. The present tense in Greek is often used in what is known as a timeless or gnomic sense. The point is that what he recommends or prohibits is a timeless principle obligatory for all believers in all ages.
3. If we eliminated every instance in the NT where the author speaks in the first person (“I”) and employs a present tense verb, we would forfeit countless ethical and theological truths that are essential for Christian faith and living.

Fifth, and finally, isn’t the word “authentain” (to exercise authority) rare in the NT? Should we place so much emphasis on a verse in which an uncommon word is employed?

1. Simply because a word is uncommon or rare in the NT doesn’t mean we cannot determine its meaning. There is extensive Greek literature from the time of the NT that enables us to discern with a high degree of probability what a particular word meant in any particular context.
2. We must also remember that, in 1 Timothy, Paul uses 65 other words that are found nowhere else in the New Testament! In fact, there are 1,934 words that occur only once in the New Testament. But in the vast majority of cases we are capable of determining their meaning.

One final point should be noted. By what hermeneutical or exegetical principle can “I do **not** permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man” mean “I **do** permit a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man”?

The Analogy(?) with Slavery

Is not the argument for why wives should submit to husbands the same as the argument for why slaves should submit to masters? If we insist on the abolition of the latter, should we not also insist on the abolition of the former? Again, the answer is No.

There are several reasons why we can insist on the abolition of slavery while retaining the submission of wives to their husbands.

1. Scripture is known to regulate undesirable relationships without condoning them as permanent ideals (see Mt. 19:8; 1 Cor. 6:1-8). Paul's recommendations for how slaves and masters relate to each other do not assume the goodness of the institution.
2. The institution of slavery is not grounded in creation but is a distortion resulting from the fall. Marriage and male headship, on the other hand, are part of the original created order that antedates the fall.
3. On several occasions the seeds for the dissolution of slavery are sown. See Philemon 16; Eph. 6:9; Col. 4:1; 1 Tim. 6:1-2. Nothing in the NT, however, suggests that the same was envisioned for the relationship between husbands and wives.
4. If the argument from slavery is used to invalidate a wife's submission to her husband, would it not also invalidate a child's submission to his/her parents? Observe how the relationship between husbands and wives, parents and children, and bondservants and masters are all addressed by Paul in Eph. 5-6.
5. No permanent moral command or moral absolute is used with reference to slavery in Paul's instructions to slaves.
6. Paul explicitly envisions and endorses the possibility of a slave obtaining freedom (1 Cor. 7:21). He never says anything comparable to this with regard to wives and submission to their husbands.

1 Corinthians 14:34-35 and the Role of Women in the Church

We have several indications in the NT that the prophetic gift was bestowed upon and exercised by women no less than by men. In Peter's speech on the day of Pentecost he explicitly said that characteristic of the present church age is the Spirit's impartation to both men *and women* of the prophetic gift. Look closely at his citation of Joel's promise:

"And it shall be in the last days,' God says, 'That I will pour forth of My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and your **daughters shall prophesy**, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even upon My bondslaves, both men **and women**, I will in those days pour forth of My Spirit, **and they shall prophesy**' (Acts 2:17-18; emphasis mine).

In Acts 21:9 Luke refers to the four daughters of Philip as having the gift of prophecy. And in 1 Cor. 11:5 Paul gave instructions regarding how women were to pray and prophesy in the church meeting. What, then, does he mean in 1 Cor. 14:34 when he says, "Let the women keep silent in the church; for they are not permitted to speak"?

Before I answer that question, observe that v. 33b goes with v. 34, not with v. 33a. It is customary for Paul to reinforce his teaching by saying that it is common practice among all the churches (cf. 1 Cor. 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 16:1). On the other hand, if v. 33b is linked with v. 33a, we are left with the somewhat trite declaration that God is a God of peace in every church. But who would ever have questioned that?

How, then, do we reconcile 11:5 and 14:34-35? Here are the many alternatives.

(1) Some say 14:34-35 is a post-Pauline interpolation, i.e., an insertion into the text of chapter 14 by some scribe after its original composition by Paul. Thus there is no conflict with 11:5. Those of us who believe in the textual integrity of 1 Corinthians will find this singularly unappealing, as well as unnecessary.

Those who embrace this view appeal to the fact that there are a number of ancient manuscripts that place vv. 34-35 at the end of the chapter rather than between vv. 33 and 36. However, this is somewhat understandable given the seemingly intrusive nature of vv. 34-35. One can see how later scribes, convinced that these verses interrupt Paul's discussion of spiritual gifts, would move them to the end of the chapter where they might function as the beginning of a new discussion. We should note, however, that there are no manuscripts whatsoever that omit vv. 34-35 from Paul's argument.

(2) A few liberal scholars argue that Paul simply changed his mind. He initially permitted women to speak in 11:5 but upon further reflection reversed himself in 14:34-35.

(3) In 11:5 Paul does not actually endorse women speaking in church. He says only that *if* they were to do so with uncovered heads it would be a disgrace. He withholds condemnation of the practice until chapter 14.

(4) Some suggest that 11:5 describes an informal meeting different from the public, corporate gathering of the church. Thus women may pray and prophesy in smaller, private groups but not in the public assembly.

(5) Others say that only *wives* are in view in 14:34-35 and that single women may therefore pray and prophesy in church. However, chapter 11 also has wives in view and it permits them to speak. Also, why would Paul prohibit the most likely older and more mature married women from speaking while allowing the younger and possibly less stable single women to speak? See Titus 2:3-5.

(6) James Hurley articulates and then responds to yet another view:

"Cultural factors have been seen [by some commentators] as the cause of Paul's remarks. Women were not well educated in his day and may well have been seated apart from the men in the church. It has been suggested that they called out questions to their husbands, disrupting the worship, or that they became noisy in times of charismatic expression by the congregation, not having the sense of order which their husbands had. The plausibility of this explanation fades somewhat when the following observations are made: (1) there is no indication elsewhere in the letter that the women in particular were unruly; (2) Paul does confront unruly situations in the letter (11:33-34; 14:27,29,31). He meets them by establishing order rather than by silencing the unruly completely; (3) the rule which Paul sets out is one which he says applies in all his churches (14:33b). It seems unlikely that the problem of noisy women had arisen in all of them; (4) it seems unlike Paul to silence all women because some are noisy or disruptive. His actual handling of other disorderly people provides concrete grounds for arguing against wholesale action when only some individuals are in fact violators" (*Men and Women in Biblical Perspective*, 187-88).

Blomberg responds to this view in similar fashion, arguing that it "fails to explain why Paul silenced *all* women and *no* men, when presumably there were at least a few well-educated, courteous, or orthodox women and at least a few uneducated, less than polite, or doctrinally aberrant men" (280-81). See also the extensive response to this position by Grudem, pp. 242-247.

(7) Others have argued recently that vv. 34-35 are a Corinthian slogan which Paul quotes, only to refute it in vv. 36-38. Blomberg cites seven reasons why this is unlikely:

"Unlike all the other widely acknowledged slogans in 1 Corinthians, these verses (1) are not concise or proverbial in form; (2) do not reflect the libertine wing of the church; (3) require the assumption that there was a significant Judaizing element in the church, which little else in the letter supports; (4) are not qualified by Paul but rejected outright; and (5) as best as we can tell represent an explanation that was never proposed in the history of the church until the twentieth century. In addition, (6) this view requires taking the Greek conjunction *e* ('or,' left untranslated in

the NIV) at the beginning of verse 36 as a complete repudiation of what has gone before, even though no other use of *e* in Paul functions in that way. Finally, (7) it assumes that 'the only people' in verse 36, a masculine plural adjective (*monous*), refers just to men rather than to both men and women, even though no other plural reference to the Corinthians ever singles out the men in this way without explicitly saying so" (280).

(8) Christopher Forbes has argued that the key to this problem is the word *aischron* in v. 35, translated "improper" in the NASB. When Paul tells women to "keep silent" he is not prohibiting their making a verbal contribution to the meeting, whether in the form of praying or prophesying or the like. Rather, he is saying that if they "desire to learn anything" they should "ask their own husbands at home" (v. 35). To do otherwise is "improper" or "shameful". According to Forbes, "the problem was that they were asking other peoples' husbands (or other people) on the spot" (274). What Paul prohibits women from doing in the public assembly is asking questions of someone other than their husbands.

But why would this be regarded as "improper" or "shameful"? Forbes says that "there existed in the Graeco-Roman world in [the first century] . . . a strong prejudice against women speaking in public, and especially against their speaking to other women's husbands. In a society with strictly defined gender and social roles, and a strong view of the rights of the man over his wife, such behaviour was treated as totally inappropriate" (274-75). Therefore, women are free to pray and prophesy within the assembly. But when issues arise that they don't understand, they must refrain from making probing inquiry. Why? For one thing, there is a limited time in any one meeting and Paul does not want anyone or any group to dominate the gathering (which seems to be at least part of the reason for his instruction in vv. 27-31 where he puts limits on how many can speak in tongues and prophesy). But more important, "to ask questions of the husbands of other women (especially as this might lead to extended discussions) would be grossly improper, and as such is not to be permitted" (276). One could reasonably argue that, if this view is correct, Paul's prohibition in v. 34 on women speaking is no longer applicable. For all will acknowledge, at least in western society, that today there is no shame or impropriety in a woman asking a question in public of another woman's husband.

(9) Finally, there is the view which understands Paul to be prohibiting women from participating in the passing of judgment upon or the evaluation of the prophets (14:29). Consider the following evidence.

a. In the NT there are always contextual limitations on the verb "to be silent" (*sigao*). This word never implies total silence on all speech but is contextually restricted. The restriction may be temporal or topical. In the case of the former, someone is to be silent *while* someone else is speaking (Acts 12:17; 15:12,13; 1 Cor. 14:30). In the case of the latter, the one who is silent does not speak in a certain manner or on a certain topic, but he/she can speak in other ways and on other issues. See 1 Cor. 14:28 where the tongues-speaker could certainly participate in singing, praying, reading Scripture, while remaining silent in that realm of concern to the apostle. Cf. 1 Tim. 2:12 with Titus 2:3-5. Thus, on this view, Paul would be restricting speech designed to critique prophetic utterances, but would not prohibit other forms of verbal participation.

b. Further support for this view is found in the structure of the paragraph. Look closely at the following detailed outline of this paragraph (which I have adapted from James Hurley, Wayne Grudem, and D. A. Carson).

General Topic (14:26) - "When you assemble . . . let all things be done for edification"

I. Specific Issue #1: Tongues (14:27-28)

A. *Restriction on the number speaking* - "it should be by two or at the most three"

B. *Ensuring the edification of the congregation* -

1. "each in turn"
2. "let one interpret"

3. "but if there is no interpreter"
 - a. "let him keep silent in the church"
 - b. "and let him speak to himself and to God"

II. **Specific Issue #2: Prophecy (14:29-35)**

- A. *Restriction on the number speaking:* "and let two or three prophets speak"
- B. *Ensuring the edification of the congregation:* "and let the others pass judgment"

(In vv. 30-35 Paul addresses in more depth the issues raised in v. 29. In vv. 30-33a he takes up v. 29a ["let two or three prophets speak"]. In vv. 33b-35 he takes up v. 29b ["and let the others pass judgment"].)

1. Regarding the prophets speaking: "but if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first keep silent"
 - a. "for you can all prophesy one by one"
 - 1) "so that all may learn"
 - 2) "and all may be exhorted"
 - b. "and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets"
 - 1) "for God is not a God of confusion"
 - 2) "but of peace"
2. Regarding passing judgment on prophecies: "as in all the churches of the saints, let the women keep silent in the churches" [i.e., during the judgment of prophecies]
 - a. "for they are not permitted to speak"
 - 1) "but let them subject themselves"
 - 2) "just as the Law also says"
 - b. "and if they desire to learn anything"
 - 1) "let them ask their own husbands at home"
 - 2) "for it is improper for a woman to speak in church"

If this outline is correct, Paul would be forbidding women to speak in church only in regard to the judgment or evaluation of prophetic utterances. Evidently he believed that this entailed an exercise of authority restricted to men only (see 1 Tim. 2:12:15).

If one should ask why Paul would allow women to prophesy but not to evaluate the prophecies of others, the answer is in the nature of prophecy itself. Prophecy, unlike teaching, does not entail the exercise of an authoritative position within the local church. The prophet was but an instrument through whom revelation is reported to the congregation. People who prophesied did not officially (or authoritatively) interpret or apply Scripture to life. Non-apostolic prophets did not proclaim the theological and ethical standards by which the church was guided, nor are they portrayed as exercising governmental authority in the church.

But to evaluate or criticize or judge prophetic utterances is another matter. In this activity one could hardly avoid explicit theological and ethical instruction of other believers. If we assume that in 1 Timothy 2 Paul prohibits women from teaching or exercising authority over men, it is understandable why he would allow women to prophesy in 1 Cor. 11:5 but forbid them from judging the prophetic utterances of others (especially men) in 14:34.

This view also explains Paul's appeal to "the Law" (i.e., the OT) in v. 34. The OT does not teach that women are to remain silent at all times in worship (cf. Ex. 15:20-21; 2 Sam. 6:15,19; Ps. 148:12). But it does endorse male headship in the home and in worship, consistent with Paul's teaching here and elsewhere.

Was Junias a Female Apostle?
Romans 16:7

In Paul's greetings to the saints in Rome, he includes the following:

"Greet Andronicus and Junia [or Junias], my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me"
(ESV; Romans 16:7).

Some translations render this, "well known *among* the apostles," thus implying that both Andronicus and Junia were themselves apostles. There are several questions that must be addressed.

First, is *Junias* masculine or feminine? If feminine, then they are most likely husband and wife. Recent examination of extensive Greek literature outside the Bible gives little help. The word *Junias* turned up only twice as a woman's name and only once as a man's name. If *Junias* is a woman, do we have reference here to a ***female apostle***? If so, it would be difficult to restrict women from holding senior governmental authority in the local church insofar as the office of apostle in the New Testament was the pinnacle of spiritual authority.

Second, how should we translate the passage: "well known **to** the apostles" or "well known **among** the apostles"? The latter would suggest that Andronicus and Junias were themselves apostles, well known in that unique circle of believers. The former would suggest that the apostles, such as Paul, knew these two people quite well.

The point has been made that "since Andronicus and Junias were Christians before Paul was, it may be that their longstanding ministry (reaching back before Paul's) is precisely what Paul might have in mind when he says 'of note among the apostles.' They may well have been known among the apostles before Paul was even converted" (Piper/Grudem, 80).

However, recent analysis of the grammar of this text (see M. H. Burer and D. B. Wallace, "Was Junias Really an Apostle? A Reexamination of Romans 16:7," *New Testament Studies* 47 [2001]:76-91) has demonstrated that this particular construction should be rendered "well known **to** the apostles." There is, therefore, no support for the idea that Junias, whether male or female, was herself/himself(?) an apostle.

Third, we must take into consideration how the word "apostle" is used in the NT. It is actually used in four senses: 1) of Jesus as The Apostle; 2) of the original twelve (with Matthias having replaced Judas Iscariot); 3) of Paul and perhaps 5 or 6 others (Silas, Barnabas, James; cf. 1 Thess. 2:6; Gal. 1:19; 1 Cor. 15:7; Acts 14:4,14); a technical use of a restricted group; and 4) a general use of many individuals who were "sent out" by a church as a delegated representative or messenger (cf. 2 Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25). If it can be demonstrated that Andronicus and (his wife?) Junias were "apostles", and given the nature of the grammar this is highly unlikely, it would likely be only in this fourth sense.

Thus I find no support in this passage for the suggestion that women held the apostolic office in the NT and thus exercised spiritual authority over the entire church body.

"Should Women Serve as Elders in the Local Church?"

The immediate problem we face in trying to answer this question is the fact that few churches or denominations today seek to reproduce the New Testament pattern for local church government. I realize that many will object to this and argue that the NT doesn't present us with an explicit ecclesiology. I happen to disagree. I believe the NT portrays for us a consistent pattern of governance by a plurality of Elders. However, it is important to realize that even if this is not the case we can still determine whether or not women should be appointed to positions of senior governmental authority.

Let me explain. I was raised a Southern Baptist. In the great majority of such churches the Board of Deacons functions in the way a Board of Elders would in another denomination. Whereas the Senior Pastor is often viewed as the sole Elder, thus exercising primary authority, the Deacons exercise a governmental role that **in practical effect** is equivalent to a Board of Elders. So, my position is that women are not permitted to hold the office of Deacon in Southern Baptist Churches. In a number of other denominational settings, such as Presbyterianism, I would happily endorse the presence of female deacons given the fact that they do not exercise final spiritual authority over the body as a whole. The issue, then, is less on the name or title of the office and more on the actual, functional authority invested in each office.

Here, then, is the critical point. When seeking to determine whether women should be elevated to a certain office in the local church, one should be less concerned with the title (whether "Elder" or "Bishop" or "Deacon" or "Pastor") and more with the actual functional authority that each church/denomination invests in that position (which isn't to say that being careful in our use of biblical terms is unimportant).

My own convictions are that the NT portrays the local church as under the authority of a plurality of individuals who are called Elders or Bishops. These latter two terms are used interchangeably in the NT, as I'll note below.

Let's begin by noting the texts in which the word "Elder" appears:

Acts 11:29-30 – "And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the **elders**."

Acts 14:23 – "And when they had appointed **elders** for them in every church, with prayer and fasting, they committed them to the Lord in whom they believed."

Acts 15:1-6 – "Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.' And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and **elders** concerning this issue. Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren. When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the **elders**, and they reported all that God had done with them. But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses." The apostles and the **elders** came together to look into this matter.

Acts 15:22-23 – "Then it seemed good to the apostles and the **elders**, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas – Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, and they sent this letter by them, 'The apostles and the brethren who are **elders**, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings.'"

Acts 16:4 – "Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and **elders** who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe."

Acts 20:17 – "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the **elders** of the church."

Acts 21:17-18 – “After we arrived in Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. And the following day Paul went in with us to James, and all the **elders** were present. After he had greeted them, he began to relate one by one the things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry.”

1 Timothy 4:14 – “Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you through prophetic utterance with the laying on of hands by the **presbytery** (or **elders**).”

1 Timothy 5:17 – “Let the **elders** who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.”

1 Timothy 5:19 – “Do not receive an accusation against an **elder** except on the basis of two or three witnesses.”

Titus 1:5 – “This is why I left you in Crete, that you might amend what was defective, and appoint **elders** in every town as I directed you.”

James 5:14 – “Is any among you sick? Let him call the **elders** of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.”

1 Peter 5:1 – “So I exhort the **elders** among you, as a fellow **elder** and a witness of the sufferings of Christ as well as a partaker in the glory that is to be revealed.”

1 Peter 5:5 – “You younger men, likewise, be subject to your **elders**; and all of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, for ‘God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’”

2 John 1:1 – “The **elder** to the chosen lady and her children, whom I love in truth; and not only I, but also all who know the truth.”

3 John 1:1 – “The **elder** to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth.”

I don’t find any indication that a local church was to be governed by a single elder or pastor. The consistent NT witness is that each church was under the oversight of a plurality of elders/bishops.

The English word “elder” is the translation of the Greek *presbuteros*, from which we get “Presbyter” and “Presbyterian”. Our English word “bishop” comes from the Greek *episkopos*, from which we get the word “Episcopal” and “Episcopalian”. Earlier I said that “Elder” and “Bishop” are interchangeable in the New Testament. What I mean is that they are two different words that describe the same office or authoritative function. “Elder” focuses on the dignity and gravity of the person who serves while “Bishop” focuses on the practical function of the office (literally, one who exercises oversight).

Why do I believe they are interchangeable? There are four passages that justify my conclusion.

First, according to Acts 20:17 Paul called for the **elders** of the church to come to him. But later in v. 28, in referring to these same elders, he says that God has made them **overseers** (ESV) or **bishops** in the church.

Second, Paul left Titus in Crete to appoint **elders** in every town (Titus 1:5). When Paul then turns to list the qualifications for this office he says, “For an **overseer** (i.e., bishop or *episkopon*) . . . must be above approach,” etc. Clearly these two terms refer to the same office.

Third, “in 1 Timothy 3:1 Paul says, ‘If any one aspires to the office of bishop/overseer, he desires a noble task.’ Then he gives the qualifications for the overseer/bishop in verses 2-7. Unlike the deacons, the overseer must be ‘able to teach’ (v. 2), and in v. 5 he is said to be one whose management of his own household fits him to care for God’s church. These two functions are ascribed to elders in the fifth chapter of this same book (1 Timothy 5:17) – teaching and governing. So it is very likely that in Paul’s mind the bishops/overseers of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 are the same as the elders of 5:17” (John Piper).

Fourth, 1 Timothy 3:1-13 clearly indicates that there are two primary offices in the NT: Elder and Deacon. Yet in Philippians 1:1 Paul directs his epistle “to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the **overseers** (*episkopoi*) and deacons.” Since Paul’s practice was to appoint **elders** in every church (Acts 14:23) it seems reasonable that the **overseers/bishops** in Phil. 1:1 is a reference to the elders in that city.

The Greek word (*poimen*) translated “pastor” is used only once in the NT in Ephesians 4:11. The related verb form (*poimaino*) has the meaning “to shepherd” or “to feed” with the idea of nurturing and sustaining the flock of God. When I put together Ephesians 4:11, 1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:9, Acts 20:28, and 1 Peter 5:1-2, it would appear reasonable to conclude that all elders exercised pastoral responsibilities. Whether or not one might function in a pastoral capacity without holding the office of elder is another matter. I tend to think the answer is yes, but that need not detain us here (it would obviously depend entirely on how and over whom such a “pastoral” ministry would be exercised).

It would also appear that whereas all elders are to be able to teach, not all teachers are elders. Although being “able to teach” (1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:9) is clearly a requirement for all elders, it is entirely conceivable that one may be gifted to teach but not qualify for the office of elder (or perhaps they do qualify but have not yet been appointed to that position).

My conclusion is that the local church is to be governed by a plurality of individuals who are described in the New Testament as **elders**, insofar as they hold an office of great dignity and importance (perhaps even with an allusion to age or at least spiritual maturity), or **bishops**, insofar as they exercise oversight of the body of Christ, or **pastors**, insofar as they spiritually feed, care for, and exercise guardianship over the flock of God.

But why do I believe that this ruling or governmental office is restricted to men? I would appeal to three arguments in defense of a male eldership.

First, I appeal to the NT two-fold description of the **function** of elders. (1) They are those who **govern or rule** the church (1 Timothy 3:4-5; 5:17; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:12; Hebrews 13:17). (2) They are those who are primarily responsible for **teaching** the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11 [assuming the words “pastor” and “teacher” refer to one function or office of “pastor-teacher”; the best grammatical analysis would indicate this is true]; 1 Timothy 3:2; 5:17; Titus 1:9). Since I have determined from 1 Timothy 2:11-15 that Paul restricted teaching and exercising authority to men, it follows that the office of Elder or Bishop is restricted to men.

Second, I would appeal to the qualifications for the office of Elder that are found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. An Elder must be “the husband of one wife” (1 Tim. 3:2 and Titus 1:6; need I say more?). For the meaning of this phrase, see my article *1 Timothy 3:2,12 and “The Husband of One Wife”* (www.samstorms.com, in Deciphering Difficult Texts under Biblical Studies). Note also that an elder “must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God’s church?” (1 Tim. 3:4-5).

Third, there is no reference anywhere in the New Testament to a female elder. You may wish to object by pointing out that this is an argument from silence. Yes, it is. But it is a deafening silence, especially when taken in conjunction with the two previous points. The bottom line is that we simply have no biblical precedent for female elders nor anything in the text that describes their nature, function, and qualifications that would lead us to believe that this could ever be a possibility.

I agree that women can serve as deacons (1 Timothy 3:8-13; Romans 16:1-2; although this is disputed by others), that they can assist and support, as “co-workers”, someone such as the apostle Paul (Phil. 4:2-3), that they can evangelize, and that they can possess and exercise in biblically appropriate ways every spiritual gift (except that of “apostle,” although I’m not persuaded “apostleship” is a spiritual gift). I suggested in Part Two of this series that women can serve and minister in virtually every capacity aside from what I have called “senior governmental authority”.

If a church is governed by a plurality of Elders the application of the preceding principles seems clear enough. However, if you are in a church or denomination that is governed by a single Senior Pastor or by a Bishop, you will need to determine if others who serve in official and governmental capacities, whether a Board of Directors or Deacons or some such equivalent group, are exercising that authority which the NT would appear to restrict to males.

Egalitarian Objections

(1) Some egalitarians have argued that since Euodia and Syntyche (Phil. 4:2-3) were “co-workers” with Paul, women were in positions of leadership and should thus be considered as viable candidates for the office of Elder. But the Greek word *sunergos* (“co-worker” or “fellow-worker”) is used of numerous individuals (e.g., Romans 16:9; Phil. 2:25; Col. 4:10-11; Philemon 24; etc.), as well as anyone who supports traveling missionaries (3 John 8). But this in no way implies that such people exercised ruling authority in the local church. Whereas all Elders would certainly qualify as “co-workers,” not all “co-workers” would qualify as Elders. Their “work” in support of the gospel, whether as those who provide financial aid, or those who evangelize, or those who intercede in prayer, or those who serve in any number of capacities, does not in and of itself indicate they were invested with governmental authority or were even qualified to serve in such a capacity (cf. Romans 16:1-2).

(2) Contrary to what some egalitarians have suggested, the reference to “older women” in Titus 2:3 does not support the notion of female Elders. Paul concluded his discussion of church offices in 1:5-9. In chapter two he focuses on a variety of individuals classified according to their age: “older men” (v. 2), “older women” (v. 3), “young women” (v. 4), and “younger men” (v. 6). Furthermore, the word in v. 2 translated “older men” (*presbutes*) is different from that used of the church office (*presbuteros*). Likewise, the word in v. 3 translated “older women” (*presbutis*) specifies age, as is evident from the contrast with the “young women” whom they are to teach (cf. 1 Timothy 5:1-2 for a similar emphasis).

(3) Hebrews 11:2 uses the plural of *presbuteros* and applies it to such women of the OT as Sarah, the mother of Moses, Rahab, and others. But clearly the author of Hebrews is using the word to refer to “a person who lived long ago,” i.e., “ancestor” or “ancient” (it is translated “people of old” in the ESV). There is not the slightest indication that the author is thinking of ecclesiastical office in the NT, nor would any reader have thought that people like Abel and Enoch and Noah (vv. 4-7) were the equivalent of those who served in senior governmental authority in the NT church. One must always be careful not “to import one meaning of a word into a context where a different meaning is the one the author clearly meant” (Grudem, 253).

(4) The epistle of 2 John is addressed to “the elect lady and her children” (v. 1). Some have seen here a reference to a woman who exercised authority in the body of Christ. However, it is far more likely that “elect lady and her children” is a metaphorical way of saying “the church and its members” (cf. v. 13; see also 2 Cor. 11:2 and Eph. 5:22-32 where the church is portrayed as a “bride” betrothed to Christ; note also how Peter refers to the church in 1 Peter 5:13 – “She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen, sends you greetings, and so does Mark, my son”).

(5) An appeal has also been made to 1 Timothy 5:3-16 where Paul discusses how “widows” should be treated. But simply being an “elderly” person, in this case over the age of 60, does not make one an “Elder” with ecclesiastical authority! Besides, the word *presbuteros* doesn’t even occur in this passage. Contrary to the claims of some, the qualifications for “widows” and “elders” are not the same (see Grudem, 256-57) and the “widows” were not remunerated for ministry but were supported because they had no believing relatives on whom they could rely for financial assistance.

(6) Finally, what about those women in whose homes churches would meet, such as Mary (Acts 12:12), Lydia (Acts 16:15), Prisca (Romans 16:5), Chloe (1 Cor. 1:11), and Nympha (Col. 4:15)? Does this imply that they exercised spiritual authority over the congregation in their midst? Of course not. Hosting a church in one’s home does not justify ignoring the qualifications for elders (1 Timothy 3; Titus 1). Are we

actually to believe that Lydia, a new convert, was appointed as a local church Elder simply because she opened her home to Paul and his associates?

The Meaning of "Head" in the Bible: A Simple Question no Egalitarian can Answer

Wayne Grudem

If you ever meet an Egalitarian (an evangelical feminist) claiming that the word "head" in the Bible doesn't mean "authority" but means "source," you may wonder how to answer. Their purpose, of course, is to get rid of the idea of authority in the family in verses like, "The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church" (Eph. 5:23). So they claim that the word "head" (the Greek word *kephalē*) meant "source" rather than "authority" in the ancient world. Sometimes they quote some ancient Greek texts which, they say, show Zeus to be the "source" of all things, or Esau to be the "source" of his clan, or which mention the "head" of a river. For a verse about husbands and wives, even this idea makes no sense (I am not the source of my wife!), but they will usually then suggest a more specific meaning like "source of encouragement."

At this point in the discussion there is something that can be done. There is a simple question which they have never been able to answer. It is this:

You claim that the Greek word for "head" means "source without the idea of authority." Will you please show me one example in all of ancient Greek where this word (*kephale*) is used to refer to a person and means what you claim, namely, "non-authoritative source"?

I asked this of both Catherine Kroeger and Gilbert Bilezikian in public debate in Atlanta in 1986 and they gave me no example. I asked this question in an academic article published in *Trinity Journal* in 1990 and received no example. I asked this question in the book *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood* in 1991 and received no example. That is because no example has ever been found.

The reason is simple: *In the Greek speaking world, to be the head of a group of people always meant to have authority over those people.* Notice the egalitarian examples: Zeus is the chief of the Greek gods! Esau was the leader of the clan descended from him. These examples don't disprove the idea of authority; they confirm it.

The example of "head of a river" doesn't prove "source without authority," because (1) this usage is not referring to a person at all, and (2) the example is misquoted for Eph. 5:23, because there "head" is singular, and "head" in the singular is in fact used to refer to the *other* end of the river, the "mouth" while only in the plural is it used of the "source" of the river (see the *Liddell-Scott-Jones Lexicon*, p. 945), and (3) in both cases it just means "end point," in the same way that it can refer to the "head of a column" or "head of a pole," and these examples have nothing to do with the ideas of "source" or "authority."

I once looked up over 2,300 examples of the word "head" (*kephale*) in ancient Greek. In these texts the word *kephale* is applied to many people in authority, but to none without governing authority:

- the king of Egypt is called "head" of the nation
- the general of an army is called the "head" of the army
- the Roman emperor is called the "head" of the people
- the god Zeus is called the "head" of all things
- David as king of Israel is called the "head" of the people
- the leaders of the tribes of Israel are called "heads" of the tribes
- the husband is the "head" of the wife
- Christ is the "head" of the church
- God the Father is the "head" of Christ

(For details, see my 35-page article available under reprints on page 15, or see pages 425-468 in *Recovering Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*).

No one in a non-leadership position is called "head" - ever. The egalitarian assertion that a person who is called the *kephale* can be the "source without governing authority" is simply false.

Therefore I would encourage you, in discussing these matters with egalitarian friends, to ask this simple question: May I see an example to support your claim that there is no authority implied in the word "head" in the statement, "the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church"?

Can egalitarians find even one example out of millions of words of ancient Greek literature where a person is called "head" and it means "non-authoritative source"? If even one example could be found, then of course we could go on to discuss whether that meaning might be the one that best fits the context of Ephesians 5.

But if they cannot find one example of this meaning, then their proposed sense of the word in Ephesians 5:23 is a theory without one hard fact to support it. Of course, people can still believe in theories that have no facts to support them if they wish, but such belief can no longer be thought to be reasonable or academically responsible. And such unsupported theories should certainly not be used in debates, or written in commentaries and reference books, or thought to be true.