

WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP

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Notes on the Gender Question and Related Biblical Texts

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INTRODUCTION

Some years ago, a cartoon appeared in *Christianity Today*.¹ Under the rubric "What If?" it depicts a beleaguered Apostle Paul arriving at Corinth and saying rather meekly, "I see you received my letter." Greeting him on the road is an angry mob of women holding placards with messages such as, "Women of Corinth Unite" and "Paul the Apostle is a male, chauvinist pig"! It is an amusing picture, of course, but in reality its sentiment could hardly be further from the truth. It is likely that no other message in the course of human civilization could match the results of Paul's letters for transforming, liberating, and dignifying the status of women. Where Paul's letters, and the gospel as a whole, have had their least impact, the condition of women in the home and in society is routinely its most distressing and degraded (wife-beating, prostitution, rape, illegal bride-burning in India, selective abortion of female babies in China, etc.).

On the other hand, it is undoubtedly the case that in some Christian contexts, Paul's teachings about women have been misunderstood, misapplied, or neglected, with regrettable results. For example, Paul's teaching on marriage roles in Eph. 5:22-33 has often been misunderstood as if it offered an unqualified endorsement of the "traditional" model of marriage, which the Bible elsewhere rejects (Gen. 2:24; Prov. 31:10-31) and even mocks (Esther 1:19-22). But there is nothing in Paul's writings about who is supposed to do the dishes or pursue further education. Nor does Paul invite husbands to make sure that their wives are being submissive. That is the wife's job, not the husband's. Rather the husband's job is to love his wife as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. In other words, a husband is to act in a manner that always puts his wife's interests well ahead of his own.

Since the Evangelical church in general, and many C.C.C.C. churches in particular, appear to be sharply divided on the question of the role of women in church leadership, which has led some critics to imagine that the Bible is hostile to interests of women, it may be appropriate to offer a more detailed discussion of this topic. My intention is not so much to convince anyone of the correctness of my interpretation of certain controversial texts (which may be far from correct in any case), as to make clear that in spite of any disagreements we may have, far more binds us together as Christians on this topic than separates us: supremely, our mutual commitment to search out the Scriptures and, as much as we can with God's help, to bring our beliefs and practices into conformity to His Word.

1) PRIORITY TO SAFEGUARD EACH OTHER'S CONSCIENCE

Even if I have the correct, Scriptural view on the subject of women in leadership, which I hope and believe is the case, it would be of little advantage to the church, which will have to answer to God who judges our hearts and motives, for me or any pastor to coerce or manipulate the church into "doing the right thing" for the wrong reasons. What good would it be, indeed consider how dangerous it would be, if a significant number are pressured to give their consent to women in leadership, if deep down they sincerely believe that the Bible prohibits this? After all, "Everything that does not come from faith is sin" (Rom. 14:23). It seems to me that it would be a lethal precedent to encourage fellow believers to

disregard the voice of conscience, even if it greatly facilitates what others believe to be progress.

2) SUBSTANTIAL COMMON GROUND BETWEEN BIBLICAL COMPLEMENTARIANS AND EGALITARIANS

In the present climate, I think that we cannot emphasize enough the vast expanse of common ground that exists between biblical complementarians and egalitarians.² We often lose sight of this in the heat of battle.

In particular, complementarians are just as convinced as egalitarians of the inherent worth and giftedness of women. We who know the Bible know that women fully share with men the image of God, they are joint heirs of the redemption wrought by Jesus Christ, and they are co-beneficiaries of the outpoured Spirit of God and of His gifts (Acts 2:17-21). Against a common misunderstanding, complementarians are careful to insist that functional subordination need not entail inferiority of any kind. Similarly, complementarians are no more surprised than egalitarians that the Bible enjoins both men and women to exercise their gifts for the upbuilding of the church, and even to teach the Word of Christ to men, as well as to women, at least under many circumstances. For this reason Paul exhorts all believers, male and female, to "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs..." (Col. 3:16). Nothing in the context suggests that Paul has only men in view. In vs. 12 he explicitly addresses those who are "God's chosen people," in vs. 13 it is those who have been forgiven by Christ, and in vs. 15 it is who are "members of one body." To this text could be added many others (cf. Heb. 3:13; 5:12), including descriptions of particular women who taught spiritual truths to men in various private or less formal contexts (cf., e.g., Abigail, who rebuked David in 1 Samuel 25, or Priscilla who, with her husband Aquila, corrected the defective theology of Apollos in Acts 18:26).

Accordingly, although complementarians are persuaded that 1 Tim. 2:12 prohibits women from teaching men in certain very specific situations (generally limited to public authoritative teaching, such as by a pastor/elder within a church setting), virtually no complementarian or egalitarian would object to a competent woman teaching history or physics to male students at a local university. Likewise, virtually no complementarian or egalitarian objects to a competent woman, such as Fanny Crosby, teaching men through the profound lyrics of her hymns, or Joyce Baldwin, teaching men through her scholarly and insightful commentaries on biblical books, etc. Furthermore, complementarians are no more surprised than egalitarians that God has so gifted certain women that they may prophesy and pray in church (1 Cor. 11:5). As is implied by the example of Paul's own doctrinally rich prayers and what is said of prophecy in a text such as 1 Cor. 14:3, the prayers and prophecies of women would have been a rich conduit for the instruction of any member of their congregation, male or female.

Furthermore, because of the Bible's profound affirmation of women, complementarians are just as accepting as egalitarians of the great privilege that the Lord has bestowed on certain women who were inspired by the Holy Spirit to author various portions of Holy Scripture, such as Deborah's song in Judges 5, Hannah's prayer in 1 Samuel 2, Mary's Magnificat in Luke 1, etc. Through their inspired writings these women have taught with inerrant authority the people of God down through the ages, both men and women. No complementarian is offended to have these texts read in public worship or identified as the Word of God (including a transparently autobiographical text such as Judges 5:7 "Village life in Israel ceased, ceased until I, Deborah arose...").

All of this is obvious, of course, but it may help to remind us that as important as the gender issue is

for Evangelicals, especially when it affects one's understanding of marriage or of the Trinity, we are not as divided as the world would like to believe. What differences there are mainly concern the very narrow issue of the right of women to teach and lead men within the church with what might be characterized as an intermediate level of authority (below that of the women whose inspired words were incorporated into Scripture, but above that of the praying and prophesying women of 1 Corinthians 11).

3) DEEPER UNITY IN OUR COMMON LOYALTY TO THE WORD OF GOD

Another way to summarize the above point is to insist that the reason why there is so much passion in the current Evangelical debate regarding gender roles is not that one group wants to denigrate women (out of male chauvinism), while the other wants to affirm them (perhaps to accommodate the present culture). It is rather that both groups rightly have a profound loyalty to Jesus Christ and hence to His Word. They believe what they do about women because they believe that their viewpoint is demanded by Scripture. This is why if anyone can demonstrate that an alternative interpretation is actually more faithful to Scripture, most Christians will readily conform their opinion to that more faithful interpretation.

In any case, although the Enemy can always pervert and exaggerate differences among Christians in order to produce painful division, the fact that we hold our different views on gender roles with a degree of passion ironically can actually bind us to each other more closely. This is so because when viewed with charity we can detect in each other a much deeper kindred spirit: the passion with which we hold our disparate views is in reality the passion of our common loyalty to the Word of God.

4) NO WARRANT FOR DIVISION IN CHRIST'S CHURCH OVER SUCH SECONDARY ISSUES

It is my conviction that there is no excuse for Christians to disfellowship one another, to become embittered against each other, or to separate over the issue of gender roles. Here we need to recapture the wholesome insight of historic Evangelicalism that concedes that there are many issues such as baptism, church polity, the gift of tongues, the future of Israel, the millennium, etc., which are important and worthy of our prayerful and earnest examination, but not of divisive obsession. May the Lord help us always to major on majors.

On anyone's view there is no text that requires that women serve as pastors or elders — at most, if the egalitarian perspective is correct, the Bible merely allows this option. Accordingly, any egalitarian should be able to function perfectly well within a church that has embraced a complementarian perspective and so has only male elders. Indeed, if the church is a congregational one, unless its female members have been deprived of the right to vote, in human terms the final authority to which the elders are responsible is the congregation. Furthermore, even in the most complementarian church, wisdom has prevailed in many settings where male leaders have come to recognize the inherent dangers of trying to shepherd or personally disciple female church members. Accordingly it is not uncommon to raise up mature, gifted women to assist in this work. In any case, if the egalitarian's interpretation of Scripture is correct, perhaps the Lord will be pleased to bless the prayers, patient labor, and winsome example of that egalitarian to bring his or her church to amendment. This is unlikely to happen, however, if the egalitarian leaves; indeed, the church's need in this matter should probably be viewed as the strongest possible evidence that the Lord would have the egalitarian stay.

Likewise, any complementarian ought to be able to function perfectly well within a church that has embraced an egalitarian perspective, even if that church has appointed female elders. Certainly a consistent complementarian will have to vote against any such appointment, and out of love he or she should attempt to correct fellow believers and dissuade any woman from serving as an elder. Nevertheless, even if these efforts should fail, the only sin involved would be that of the female elder and perhaps those who appointed her, but not that of the complementarian for being a faithful member of that church. Of course, in an Evangelical context all or most of these persons would be acting in good conscience on what they sincerely believe to be the teaching of the Word of God (on a matter over which believing scholars in large numbers are divided), so the complementarian could view the situation with some charity. One might compare here churches that may have embraced a defective view on baptism or eschatology, but have done so out of a sincere desire to follow Scripture. While this is not an excuse for any of us to rest in our constant attempt to "search the Scriptures to see if these things are so" and bring our belief and practice into ever greater conformity to God's Will, I see no evidence that the Lord has withheld His blessing from such conscientious churches. It is well to be reminded of how forbearing our Lord can be when the motives of His people are pleasing in His sight (2 Chron. 30:19, 20).

It may be sinful for a woman to teach men in an authoritative manner or to lead men, as complementarians hold, but on no one's view is it sinful on the part of a male complementarian to learn in a spirit of humility from a female elder's teaching at whatever points it is consistent with the Word of God! Indeed, if they have a teachable spirit believers are capable of learning from anyone, even from children, or of obeying even those who are pagans, so long as to do so is not to disobey God (Acts 5:29). Along this line one might consider the example of David, who continued to acknowledge the leadership of Saul and would not lift his hand against the Lord's anointed, even though David had personally witnessed the Spirit's departure from Saul. If such comparisons are possible, it seems likely that the lack of the Holy Spirit is an even more serious disqualification for the leadership of God's people than the lack of appropriate gender.

In any case, although it should always be a high priority for elders to be properly qualified, invariably in any church there may be some elders who fail in this regard. Even if the elders are all male, some may lack the requisite self-control, hospitality, gentleness, etc., which are specified in 1 Timothy 3, for example. Such defects in one's leaders are serious and should certainly impel the church to more intense prayer and earnest correction where needed, but no Biblical text authorizes a church split or the departure of disgruntled members on such grounds.

5) MY INTERPRETATION OF CERTAIN KEY TEXTS: A COMPLEMENTARIAN HERMENEUTIC WITH SOME COMPLEMENTARIAN, BUT ALSO SOME EGALITARIAN CONCLUSIONS

My interpretation of the key texts on the gender issue, such as 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Corinthians 11, places me at a midpoint between a traditional complementarian and a traditional egalitarian.

1 TIMOTHY 2, ETC. 3

Specifically, my approach to 1 Timothy 2, 1 Corinthians 11, etc., resembles that of most complementarians. I hold, for example, that 1 Corinthians 11 and 1 Timothy 2 cannot be dismissed as merely culturally relative. Paul bases his teaching on universally applicable creation norms. On the other hand, I cannot believe that Paul misinterpreted Genesis 2-3 in its account of Adam and Eve,

whose relationship is explicitly presented as the paradigm for marriage roles, not gender roles. The fact that Eve is created after Adam is a consequence of the fact that she is created from Adam. There are rich implications of the remarkable mode of Eve's creation, but almost universally recognized is the concern to emphasize the fact that Eve is made of the same substance as Adam, and hence is in no way ontologically inferior to him, and also that Adam is now to love Eve as he loves his own body ("bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh").⁴ We don't have to guess at this divinely inspired intention in the narrative. Moses makes it explicit in Gen. 2:24: "For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and cleave to his wife and become one flesh." Appropriately, Paul confirms that this is also his own understanding of Adam and Eve in Eph. 5:22ff.

Based on these texts, my view of marital roles resembles the complementarian position. On the other hand, I am persuaded with Martin Luther, for example, as well as with the sixteenth-century Dutch exegete, G. Estius, the English Puritan William Gouge, the seventeenth century German theologian Abraham Calovius, and many others, that because Paul grounds his admonition in 1 Tim. 2:12 in the account of Adam and Eve, 1 Timothy 2 concerns marriage roles, not gender roles. One must keep in mind that the Greek terms for "man," *anēr*, and "woman," *gynē*, are also the normal terms that Greek uses for "husband" and "wife." For this reason some English Bibles, such as the once popular Williams' Translation, render these terms in 1 Timothy 2 as "husband" and "wife."⁵ It is a striking fact that within Paul's writings, apart from 1 Timothy 2, the Greek word for "man"/"husband" occurs 50 times and for "woman"/"wife" 54 times in close proximity within eleven distinct contexts, and in every case these terms bear the meanings "husband" and "wife," rather than "man" and "woman." Read in this way, 1 Tim. 2:8-15 offers nearly a word-for-word, or at least thought-for-thought parallel with 1 Pet. 3:1-7.⁶ Not surprisingly, Peter acknowledges that he read Paul's writings in 2 Pet. 3:15.

1 Timothy 2:8-15

⁸Therefore I want husbands everywhere to pray lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing [with their wives].

⁹Likewise, I want wives to adorn themselves with proper dress, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, ¹⁰but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. ¹¹A wife should learn in quietness and full submission. ¹²I do not permit a wife to teach, that is, to boss her husband; she must be quiet.⁷

¹³For Adam was formed first, then Eve. ¹⁴And Adam was not deceived, but his wife.¹⁵ But she will be saved even through [the seemingly mundane work of] childrearing — that is, if they continue in

1 Peter 3:7, 1-6 [note order]

⁷Husbands, in the same way live considerately with your wives, showing them honor as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers. ¹In the same way, wives, be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not obey the word, they may be won over without a word by the behavior of their wives, ²when they see the reverence and purity of your lives. ³Your adornment should not be merely outward — braiding your hair, wearing gold and putting on clothes. ⁴Instead, it should be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight.

⁵For this is the way the holy wives of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They were submissive to their own husbands, ⁶like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her

faith, love and holiness with propriety.

master. You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

Since it is universally agreed that 1 Peter 3 refers to marriage, if one allows "Scripture to interpret Scripture," that is, if one allows what is clear to assist in the interpretation of what is less clear, the presence of so many striking verbal and conceptual parallels between 1 Peter 3 and 1 Timothy 2 offers strong support for the present interpretation that 1 Timothy 2, likewise, concerns marriage.⁸

As a final point, to limit the context of this exhortation to the domestic sphere is not to imply that wifely submission can be safely set aside the moment a couple walks out of their home. Familial responsibilities in general, and the marriage order in particular, continue to take precedence whether a married couple is out shopping, at work, or in church. The point is, rather, that a wife's responsibility to be submissive is precisely limited to familial concerns and as such would not necessarily prohibit her from being the president of the company where her husband is employed, or of the country where her husband resides.⁹ R. Nicole makes the analogous observation that it would constitute no necessary violation of biblically mandatory parental authority for a son to become a general of the army in which his father serves or president of their country.¹⁰

1 CORINTHIANS 11

Similarly, the "headship" mentioned in 1 Cor. 11:3 is exactly the same as the "headship" mentioned in Eph. 5:22. The husband is the "head" of the wife, who is compared in this metaphor to his own body, which he loves, cares for, etc. This "one flesh" image, which is based on Genesis 2 (to which both 1 Corinthians 11 and Ephesians 5 make allusion), is a profound key to marital happiness: a husband is called to love his wife as his own body, etc. I consider it strange, however, and perhaps dangerous, for a man to imagine himself to be the head of any woman other than his own wife. Hence, in my opinion 1 Corinthians 11 concerns the marriage relationship, not gender relationship (e.g., "the head of a woman is her husband," as the RSV renders 11:3, rather than "the head of the woman is man," with the NIV).

1 TIMOTHY 3 AND TITUS 1

An appeal to the masculine, or androcentric, orientation of the requirements for overseers (= elders) and deacons in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 (e.g., that a candidate should be "the husband of but one wife," etc.), is indecisive, in my judgment, for the issue of the right of women to hold church office. As is widely recognized, it is the common practice of the Bible to express legal norms from the male vantage point, perhaps as much to achieve an economy of expression as a reflection of circumstances which would have been culturally typical. The 10th Commandment, for example, states, "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant, etc." The fact that this text mentions "your neighbor's wife" rather than "your neighbor's husband," and that all the references to "you" and "your" throughout the verse are masculine (in Hebrew) rather than feminine, ought not to be misinterpreted as if this commandment applies only to men. In the absence of other constraints, norms which utilize male-oriented terminology ought to be construed, in general, as including both sexes in their purview. Appropriately, at least according to one interpretation of Mark 10:12, Jesus recognized this principle with respect to the male-oriented divorce law of Deut. 24:1-4 when he applied its provision to a divorce initiated by a wife.

In keeping with this recognized practice, it is noteworthy that in the Old Testament every text that offers a "job description" for an office is presented in an androcentric manner, precisely as is found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1. This is so even where it is certain that the office in question did, in fact, permit women. This is the case, for example, with the office of prophet in Deut. 18:14-22 (cf. Deuteronomy 13) and the office of judge/elder in Deut. 16:18-17:13. Especially illuminating is the foundational description of the office of "prophet" in Num. 12:6-8: "When a prophet of the Lord is among you, I reveal myself to him in visions, I speak to him in dreams." In keeping with standard ancient practice, this "job description" is blatantly androcentric even though the Lord is addressing the concerns of the prophetess Miriam (Exod. 15:20), who is mentioned in the immediate context!¹¹

Consequently, if other biblical texts could be found which prohibit women from serving in church office, 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 would not be in disagreement. If such texts are lacking, however, the androcentric language of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 cannot provide an adequate basis for assuming such a prohibition.

PRIESTS OR ELDERS?

Our attention has been given to the principal texts that have been thought to oppose the right of women to hold church office. If space permitted, it would be useful for the sake of balance to examine those texts which have often been advanced in support of the right of women to hold church office. These include Gal. 3:28, 1 Cor. 11:11-12, 1 Pet. 3:7, and Acts 2:17-21 (note the underlying allusion, by way of Joel 2:28-29, to Num. 11:24-30, which records how the original seventy elders were authenticated by an experience of simultaneous group prophecy).

In the final analysis, however, perhaps the strongest positive argument for the inclusion of women in the eldership is the recognition that official leadership in the New Testament church appears to have been modeled most directly not on the Old Testament priesthood, which was restricted to physically perfect men from the tribe of Levi, but on the Old Testament eldership, which appears to have been remarkably unrestrictive. For this reason, the New Testament designates its leaders as "elders," rather than "priests."¹² In the Old Testament there was no tribal requirement for eldership/judgship (Othniel was a Kenizzite, and hence a convert of Edomite descent; Jephthah was the son of a prostitute), no health requirement (Ehud was handicapped), and, at least in the case of Deborah, no gender requirement.¹³ Perhaps because God intended to make His strength perfect in human weakness, He often raised up to servant leadership those who were culturally least expected (Judges 2:16-18).

SUMMARY

Accordingly, although I approach the Scriptures in a manner that has most in common with complementarian scholars, and although I am a complementarian when it comes to marriage roles, I am an egalitarian when it comes to societal or ecclesiastical gender roles. I know of no biblical text that would prohibit a woman from serving as the president of the PTA, of IBM, or of the USA. Likewise, although I believe that it would have been culturally unexpected for a woman to serve as an elder at any time in the biblical period, as it would also have been unusual for a slave to serve as an elder, I know of no biblical text or principle that would exclude either possibility. Indeed, as already mentioned, we have at least one indisputable example of a female elder (= judge) in the case of Deborah.

Of course, much more could and should be said on this subject, some of which I have addressed

elsewhere.¹⁴

6) THE NEED FOR HUMILITY

Because there is so much confusion and misunderstanding on the subject of gender roles and marriage roles, both inside and outside the church, from time to time pastors should teach on these matters, but not harp on them, because the preaching and teaching ministry needs to be as balanced as are the Scriptures. Given the fact that there are substantial differences of opinion among sincere believers, any such teaching should be open to correction and as generous and respectful as possible toward those who hold alternative views.

Footnotes

¹ "What If..." by Lawing, *Christianity Today*, April 14, 1972, p. 19.[\(back to text\)](#)²

"Complementarians" are those who believe that there are distinct, complementary roles for men and women in marriage, in the church, and in society. "Egalitarians" are those who deny that there are any distinct roles for men as opposed to women in marriage, in the church, and in society.[\(back to text\)](#)³ S. T. Foh argues that 1 Tim. 2:12 is the only adequate reason for not ordaining women (*Women and the Word of God: A Response to Biblical Feminism* [Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980] 238-240). Cf. also G. W. Knight, III, *The Role Relationship of Men and Women. New Testament Teaching, Revised* (Chicago: Moody, 1985) 17.[\(back to text\)](#)⁴ For a closer examination of the implications of the mode of Eve's creation, see G.P. Hugenberger, "Rib" in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 4 (ed. G.W. Bromiley; Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1988) 183-185.[\(back to text\)](#)⁵ C.B. Williams, *The New Testament: A Translation in the Language of the People* (1937), which is reprinted in *The Four Translation New Testament* (New York: Iversen Associates, 1996). The rendering "wife" and "husband" is included as an alternative in the *New Revised Standard Version* (1989).[\(back to text\)](#)

⁶ Paul's appeal to Adam and Eve as a paradigm for marriage functions in a parallel manner to Peter's appeal to Abraham and Sarah. Of course Abraham and Sarah are an especially attractive paradigm for marriage for those who would share Peter's Jewish heritage (whether they are ethnic Jews to whom he was possibly writing, so 1 Pet. 1:1, or all believers who are now Jews "inwardly" and so have come to share this common heritage, cf. 1 Pet. 2:9f.). But Paul, writing to Timothy with his mixed Jewish and Gentile parentage (see Acts 16:10), appropriately reaches all the way back in biblical history to choose the one couple whose marriage is clearly paradigmatic for both Jews and Gentiles, namely, Adam and Eve.[\(back to text\)](#)

⁷ Paul's concern is to prohibit only that sort of teaching which would constitute a failure of the requisite wifely "submission" to her husband (the very concern with which verse 11 concludes). In other words, juxtaposed as it is to the prohibition against "exercising authority over/lording it over/bossing her husband," however we are to understand the problematic term *authentein*, the term "teach" in this context acquires a strident or pejorative connotation. Here we may compare the use of "teach," for example, in Matt. 28:15, where the soldiers were "taught" by the chief priests and elders what to say concerning the missing body of Our Lord. In Matthew and in 1 Timothy we should not be thinking so much of teachers pulling out a chalkboard, as pulling out a gun. "Teach" has become an approximate synonym of "tell" or "order."[\(back to text\)](#)

8 Further confirmation for a reference to marriage, rather than gender, in 1 Timothy 2 can be found in Tit. 2:4, 5. The presence of a number of significant parallels between 1 Timothy and Titus as a whole is widely recognized (*e.g.*, Tit. 1:7-9 // 1 Timothy 3; Tit. 2:9f. // 1 Tim. 6:1ff.). Accordingly, it is notable that Tit. 2:4,5 offers parallels to 1 Timothy 2, as well as to 1 Pet. 3:1-7, for that matter. Tit. 2:5 urges young wives to be "chaste," as does 1 Pet. 3:2, and Tit. 2:5 urges that wives "be submissive to their own husbands," as does 1 Tim. 2:11 and 1 Pet. 3:5. It is to be noted that in Titus Paul's use of the language of submission [*hypotasso*\ *hypotage*\] of a "wife [*gyne*\]" to a "husband [*anevr*\]" comports precisely with his practice in Eph. 5:21-33 and Col. 3:18, 19, where in each case Paul urges not that women in general should be submissive to men in general, but that wives should be submissive to their own husbands. In the face of this established pattern of usage only the most compelling evidence should be allowed to overturn the presumption that "submission" in 1 Timothy 2 has to do with a requirement specifically for wives rather than for women in general.[\(back to text\)](#)

9 See the helpful distinction between political-societal and domestic spheres in S.T. Foh's discussion of the biblical requirement of submission (*Women and the Word of God*). Reflecting such a distinction, presumably Deborah was a submissive wife to her husband Lappidoth in terms of their domestic life, while in the political sphere she was a Judge over Israel, including her husband. In a similar manner, it may be that a requirement to be submissive in the familial sphere would not necessarily require submission in the ecclesiastical sphere (a man's slave could conceivably be his elder at church, *etc.*). For example, although Rom. 13:1f. exhorts believers to "be subject [*hypotassestho*\] to the governing authorities," using the same terminology as Paul applies to wifely submission, it is doubtful that this command would prohibit a believer from being an elder of a church where a senator, president or king might be in attendance. Naturally, special wisdom and care would be required by such an elder not to allow his rightful ecclesiastical authority to tempt him to challenge or compromise the rightful political authority of his church member (such as by threatening excommunication unless taxes are reduced, *etc.*).[\(back to text\)](#)

10 R. Nicole, "Woman, Biblical Concept of," in *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (ed. W. A. Elwell; Grand Rapids: Baker, 1984) 1178. *Cf.*, *e.g.*, Joseph who ruled over his father in his capacity as vice-regent of Egypt (Gen 37:10; 47:11f.).[\(back to text\)](#)

11 Likewise, even though the male-oriented language of 1 Tim. 3:8-13 would seem to allow only male deacons (assuming *gynaikas* in 3:11 refers to the wives of deacons, as argued by G.W. Knight, III, *Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles*, NIGTC [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992]), in Rom. 16:1 Paul may intend to identify Phoebe as a "deacon." *Cf.*, *e.g.*, C. E. B. Cranfield, who regards the identification as "virtually certain" (*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on The Epistle to the Romans*, Vol. 2, ICC [Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1979] 781).[\(back to text\)](#)

12 The preference of Roman Catholicism to view its leaders as "priests" is a necessary consequence of its understanding of the mass/Lord's Supper as a literal sacrifice.[\(back to text\)](#)

13 In support of the supposition that the "judges" of the book of Judges, including Deborah, were in fact elders, *cf.* Deuteronomy 1, which melds together Exodus 18 (the appointment of the judges) and Numbers 11 (the appointment of the seventy elders) with the implication that these two chapters record the same event.[\(back to text\)](#)

14 See G.P. Hugenberger, "Women in Church Office: Hermeneutics or Exegesis? A Survey of Approaches to 1 Tim 2:8-15" in *The Journal of the Evangelical Society*, 35:3 (1992) 341-360.([back to text](#))