

**Church on a Mission**

**Releasing men and women  
into ministry**

**PART 2**

**July 2007**

**Simon Holley & Kirstie Cook**





## 1. Introduction

The issue of men and women and how they relate and operate in the church is a critical one for today – an area of much confusion but huge potential. If the church is to fulfil its God given mandate of being ‘salt and light’ and ‘ambassadors of the kingdom’ in an increasingly confused and darkened world then it’s critical that the whole church is mobilised to play its part in accordance with God given principles.

**In part 1** we introduced this subject and outlined the 8 principles that we are proposing that we as a church should operate from. It is important that this paper is read in conjunction with part 1 as we will not cover the same ground. In part 1 we outlined and defended the first 3 principles

1. Men and women are equal in value but differ in role.
2. Eldership (defined as senior governmental authority in the church) has the dual responsibilities of expounding the Scriptures and exercising final governmental oversight of the body of Christ. Elders should be male and operate as an eldership team. By implication, all other wider leadership roles in the church can be fulfilled by suitably qualified men and women.
3. Eldership decisions should be consultative in nature, well discussed and well communicated. The wider church (men and women) should be clearly involved (and seen to be involved) in the process. – (eg Ministry leaders team meeting, Coaches, LHG, wider church). It is particularly important that women are involved and seen to be involved in the process so that the role of women is not misunderstood. However, church is not a democracy but a theocracy with delegated authority to the elders. Once consulted, the final decision and responsibility rests with the elders and they are accountable for those decisions to the overseeing apostolic team. The church should willingly submit to the leadership of the elders at this point.

**In part 2** we shall cover the last 5 principles, unpacking what is a deacon, how we should operate in public meetings and particularly focussing on some of the more tricky texts in Paul’s pastoral epistles.

### **Leading (Deacon role)**

4. Both men and women can and should oversee ministry areas (King’s kids, Youth, Events, Healing Prayer, Social Action, Worship etc) and Coach and lead Smallgroups, forming teams wherever possible. This should be done under the authority of the eldership with clear support, coaching and accountability of each leader to an individual elder. Ministry leaders should meet together regularly with the eldership team to ensure that each ministry is well supported and resourced and playing its part in the overall vision of the church.
5. Decisions concerning specific ministries are made by those leading those ministries (in partnership with their team) using the principle of delegated authority. Important decisions can be discussed with the overseeing elder during regular coaching times. Obviously, the overseeing elder should not be ‘overbearing’ and the leader should not be ‘rebellious’. Where there is disagreement or there is major impact on the wider church the rest of the eldership team should be consulted.

### **Public (Sunday) Contributions**

6. Elders should do the bulk of the teaching. All teaching is of course subject to scripture and the wider accountability of the Newfrontiers apostolic team.
7. Non elders (male and female) can and should teach the church under the authority of the elders.
8. It is particularly important that the roles of both men and women are visible on a Sunday so that our theology is not misrepresented by our practice. Due to the ‘governing’ aspect of the anchor person, anchoring should be done by the elders or those identified by the elders as being trained in the area of governing. Both women and men can and should contribute through worship leading, welcome, testimony, announcements, prayer, prophecy, songs, scripture reading, art etc. The testing of prophecy is part of the role of the church corporately together with the elders.

## 2.0 Principles 4 & 5 - Leadership

### 2.1 Illustration of the roles of women from the Old Testament

There are a number of examples of women in leadership in the Old Testament we could draw upon to support the view that God most definitely calls both men and women a to hold positions of responsibility and leadership in order to contribute to his plans.

**Huldah** – she was prophetess who gave advice to national leaders under instruction from the King. She was a contemporary of Jeremiah and Zephaniah which somewhat blows apart by some that women are used when there are no men available. Her story can be found in 2 Kings 23 and 2 Chron 34.

Another example would be **Miriam**. She was the sister of Moses and exercised prophetic ministry alongside him, working also with Aaron. (Exodus 15)

There are a number of other situations were we find women exercising a prophetic ministry or providing wisdom to leaders. Some commentators choose to make an issue of the fact that much of these ministries would have been carried out in private and there was not a public demonstration of these women's particular gifts<sup>1</sup>.

However, it does not appear that scripture sees it necessary to major on that point and I would suggest that the key principle to take from these examples is that **God clearly used women to bring wisdom and direction to those leading at the time**.

The most notable example of a female leader in the Old Testament is **Deborah**. She appears in the book of Judges and is in fact named as the fourth judge of Israel. The book of Judges concerns the time following the death of Joshua and the exodus and before the first King was appointed. During this time the people were people were a bit lost, with no clear leader. It was a time when the people fell foul to worshipping false idols, As a result they received divine judgement and were attacked by foreign enemies. The nation would then repent and cry out to God and He would supply a 'judge' to lead the people out of trouble and then govern the Nation during their lifetime. Then the whole rebellion, retribution, repentance and rescue cycle would begin all over again. The Judge was a leader of their day, specifically called to act as a deliverer at the time and provide wisdom. The permanent leadership of the tribes at the time were in the hands of the 'elders'; senior men entrusted to conduct the day to day affairs of the tribe on account of their wisdom and experience. It is into this time in history that we see Deborah emerge, bringing a message and a challenge for Barak, the senior leader of the time as to what he must do to rescue the people. Barak clearly recognises that Deborah is the woman for the job and was humble enough to send her out as his mouthpiece. Thus we can see again how God clearly chose and gifted Deborah for this vital task, which she performed with the blessing of the leadership of the time.

---

<sup>1</sup> J Piper & W Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Men & Womanhood* (Crossway, Illinois), P. 191.

## 2.2. Jesus and women

Jesus was revolutionary in how he related to women. He associated freely with them and taught some as disciples. This was a powerful departure from the environment he was living in where a rabbinical citation was ‘one should not talk with a woman in the street, not even his own wife and certainly not someone else’s wife because of the gossip of men’<sup>2</sup>. Jewish men prayed ‘blessed art thou O Lord who has not made me a woman’. Women sat separately, were rarely taught the Torah and were not counted in quorums. In social life few women would talk to men outside their family and could touch no man other than their spouse. Yet, Jesus spent time with women, complimented them on their understanding of his message and their devotion to them. The Samaritan woman he met set up a small revival following her encounter with him after he first asked for her help! Women travelled as part of his band of followers, they appeared in his parables and he did miracles on their behalf.

Perhaps most remarkable of all however was that Jesus chose to show himself first to a woman following his resurrection from the dead. Not only this, but he also commissioned her to go and tell his disciples, ‘I am returning to my Father and your Farther, to my God and your God’ (John 20 v17) what a message to be carrying - what a responsibility. Mary Magdalene’s devotion to Jesus, the way she gave himself to him and his mission after he had so dramatically and miraculously freed her from the demonic was what placed her in a position to be trusted with the most significant message history has ever known.

Jesus demonstrated a different approach to traditional men’s and women’s roles by mixing up roles a bit – he had children sitting on his knee, cooked, and washed feet. He challenged views and rights in divorce and marriage and gave women equal rights.

Dorothy L Sayers summed up his actions beautifully:

*‘Perhaps it is no wonder women were first at the cradle and last at the cross. They had never known a man like this man – there had never been such another. A prophet and teacher who ... never had an axe to grind and no uneasy male dignity to defend; who took them as he found them and was completely unselfconscious. There is no act, no sermon, no parables in the whole gospel that borrows its pungency from female perversity; nobody could possibly guess from the words of Jesus that there was anything ‘funny’ about a women’s nature.’<sup>3</sup>*

It is safe to conclude that Jesus firmly put women back into the picture in terms of their worth as members of society as well as of course the role they play in Gods kingdom. What he **did** do was demonstrate their worthiness before God and His desire to see them free to be all they can be in what God calls them to. What he **did not do** was re-order the created purpose of men and women. This is important because as we look at roles of men and women in Church we need to grasp that value does not come from role but from who we are in Christ.

---

<sup>2</sup> Milne, 1993

<sup>3</sup> Sayers, 1971

## 2.3 Paul's teaching

To understand NT leadership in it's fullest sense we need to delve a little deeper into some of the apostle Paul's writing on this issue.

### Passage 1 – Galatians 3

**Gal 3:25-29 ESV** But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, (26) for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. (27) For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (28) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (29) And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

Egalitarians trumpet this passage as demonstrating that Paul was 'the ultimate Egalitarian'. Martin Scott says "It is not possible to maintain that this verse only relates to the status of men and women before God with no relevance to the horizontal outworking of this new status"<sup>4</sup>

### However, there are certain things we should note

None of the major teachers of the church up to the last century have taught that this passage abolished the male-female role distinction in marriage or the church.<sup>5</sup> This may of course be because of male bias but it's important to note.

The context of the passage is our standing by faith before God 'in Christ'. It is not directly speaking to the roles of men and women but instead to the status of men and women. This is the historical understanding and has been admitted even by some egalitarians.<sup>6</sup>

Paul is therefore not talking in this passage of **role** in the family or the church but standing before God of righteousness and faith. It moves women into their place as heirs according to the promise. Women and men are 'equal' in the sight of God but different in role. Egalitarians would argue that this is impossible. But it's clear that **equality in value but difference in role** is evidenced repeatedly in scripture – most notably in the relationship between God the Son and God the Father. It is clear also that eldership cannot be about value or every non elder (male and female) would be of lesser value. There is nothing in the passage to refute that this can all be true while still maintaining that there are also different roles in the church for different people.

### Key principles from passage 1

- **Equality of value must be clearly declared in the church (particularly in an age where the rich, famous and intelligent are valued supremely)**
- **Nothing in the passage disallows a difference of role**

---

<sup>4</sup> M Scott, *For such a time as this*, (PS Promotions Ltd, London), P. 63.

<sup>5</sup> J Piper & W Grudem, *Recovering Biblical Men & Womanhood* (Crossway, Illinois), P. 156.

<sup>6</sup> Jewlett quoted in *Recovering Biblical Men & Womanhood* P. 161.

## 2.4 Passage 2 – 1 Corinthians 11

**1Co 11:1-16 ESV** Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. (2) Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you. (3) But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. (4) Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, (5) but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head--it is the same as if her head were shaven. (6) For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head. (7) For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man. (8) For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. (9) Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. (10) That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. (11) Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; (12) for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God. (13) Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a wife to pray to God with her head uncovered? (14) Does not nature itself teach you that if a man wears long hair it is a disgrace for him, (15) but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering. (16) If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God.

It is important to note the cultural context of this passage: a married woman whether Greek, Roman or Jew would cover her head in public. As Loren Cunningham writes “these customs had exceptions but the exceptions were usually a sign of mourning, sexual immorality or frenzied religious rituals”.<sup>7</sup>

### 2.4.1 Fundamental principle

We must distinguish between the fundamental principle that underlies a text and the application of that principle in a specific culture. The fundamental principle is that the sexes although equal are different.

The fundamental principle at stake here is ‘headship’ concerning a wife and her husband. It is underlining the fact that the sexes, although equal, are different. In Corinthian culture failing to wear a head covering sent a signal to the church (and society) that a woman was rejecting male leadership – particularly the leadership of her husband. Paul was only concerned with head coverings because of the message they sent. The gospel, the church and God’s glory are compromised.

Notice that a wife is no more inferior to the husband than Christ is to God. Important principle of submission – we can submit without being ‘inferior’. As Christ chose to submit to God, a wife should choose to submit to the husband.

### 2.4.2 Husbands and wives not women to men

Where the word submit is used it is always used in the context of husband to wife – not woman to man. This has implications for single women leading with single guys.

### 2.4.3 Equality and interdependency emphasised

Verses 11-12 demonstrate that Paul would utterly reject the notion that women are inferior or lesser human beings. The important thing is that God is ‘glorified’ and this is only done as men and women work together in partnership with correct relationships to each other.

---

<sup>7</sup> L Cunningham, *Why Not Women?*, (Ywam publishing, Seattle), P. 180.

#### 2.4.4 Bringing it up to date

Today, if a woman fails to wear a head covering no one thinks she is in rebellion. The principle though still stands – women should pray and prophecy in a way that makes it clear that they submit to leadership. This of course also applies to everyone in the church<sup>8</sup>

#### Key principles from Passage 2

- i) Head covering is not the issue – it is about **correct submission to the appropriate leadership.**
- ii) For married women it is to the husband in the home and elders in the church. For all others it is the appropriate delegated authority. For example a single woman leading with a single guy does not submit to the authority of the guy but to her coaches (she should of course respect his opinion as he should hers).
- iii) Men & Women can prophesy and pray in public given that they are expressing a correct relationship to leadership
- iv) Men and women are equal and interdependent.

#### 2.5 Passage 3 – Romans 16:1-12

**Rom 16:1-12 ESV** I commend to you our sister Phoebe (**f**), a servant (**lit deaconess**) of the church at Cenchreae, (2) that you may welcome her in the Lord in a way worthy of the saints, and help her in whatever she may need from you, for she has been a patron of many and of myself as well. (3) Greet Prisca (**f**) and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, (4) who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well. (5) Greet also the church in their house. Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who was the first convert to Christ in Asia. (6) Greet Mary (**f**), who has worked hard for you. (7) Greet Andronicus and Junia (**f?**), my kinsmen and my fellow prisoners. They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me. (8) Greet Ampliatus, my beloved in the Lord. (9) Greet Urbanus, our fellow worker in Christ, and my beloved Stachys. (10) Greet Apelles, who is approved in Christ. Greet those who belong to the family of Aristobulus. (11) Greet my kinsman Herodion. Greet those in the Lord who belong to the family of Narcissus. (12) Greet those workers in the Lord, Tryphaena (**f**) and Tryphosa (**f**). Greet the beloved Persis, who has worked hard in the Lord.

Notice first that this passage (Rom 16) contains some significant references to women. Priscilla clearly was an influential woman in her church<sup>9</sup>. Likewise Tryphaena and Tryphosa were clearly ‘serving women’ who Paul recognised. None of this proves female eldership – but it is a strong indicator of female leadership and service in the church.

It is clear that there were 2 identified roles in NT church – **elders** (also called bishops) and **deacons**<sup>10</sup>. It is clear that elders had the governance of the church (1

<sup>8</sup> *Heb 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you.*

<sup>9</sup> The argument that she led the church because she is named before her husband and the church was in their house seem weak to me as hosting and leading are clearly not necessarily related. Was Lydia the leader of the church in her house even though she was a brand new believer?

<sup>10</sup> *Phi 1:1* To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons:

Tim 5:17, Titus 1:9) whereas this is nowhere identified as part of the deacons role. It is true that the deacon role is nowhere clearly defined, but the best suggestion is from Acts 6:1-6 where the apostles devote themselves to prayer and ministry of the word while seven others are chosen to help organise the church.

Eldership is clear identified as being for men only (see part 1). **But is the role of ‘deacon’ available to men and women?** We believe it is. Firstly, there is some evidence of female deacons. The best evidence<sup>11</sup> is from this passage in Romans 16. Phoebe is described as a deaconess. The use of the word patron indicates that this is more than a casual role.

There is additional evidence for female deacons in the early church. The Apostolical Constitutions, book iii. says, “Ordain a deaconess who is faithful and holy, for the ministries toward the women.” Pliny in his celebrated letter to Trajan, says, when speaking of the efforts which he made to obtain information respecting the opinions and practices of Christians, “I deemed it necessary to put two maidservants who are called “ministrae” (that is “deaconesses”) to the torture, in order to ascertain what is the truth.”

Some historians seem to think that the ministry of the female deacons was limited to serving other women. However, we have no evidence of this from scripture – in fact here in Rom 16 it’s clear that Phoebe did minister to Paul in some way<sup>12</sup>.

Notice also that the initial reason for employing deacons (Acts 6) was so that the elders did not become ‘bogged down’ with practical ministry tasks but were free to pray and study the word. We would do well to remember this.

### **Key principles from passage 3**

- role of deacon as ‘facilitator of various ministries in the church for the benefit of the church’ is fairly clear but not totally clear from scripture
- NT evidence plus early church evidence would suggest that there were women deacons.
- Elders ‘laid hands’ on deacons to commission them. We would do well to follow this practice both for the sake of recognition and impartation. (Acts 6:6)

---

<sup>11</sup> There is some secondary evidence from 1 Tim 3 although it is stiffly argued that the word ‘and their wives’ means exactly that and is not a reference to female deacons. From my reading it is hard to decide either way.

<sup>12</sup> The word patron can mean helper or leader. Egalitarians often argue that the word patron means leader but it seems a weak one to me. Would Paul call Phoebe a leader of himself – unlikely given that he nowhere else does this – even of another man. There is also a clear play on words “help phoebe because she has been a helper to many”

## **2.6 Elder versus Deacon job description**

Can we draw up then a clear differential in the job descriptions for elders and deacons (hereafter called ministry leaders). I believe we can.

**Act 4:34-35 ESV** There was not a needy person among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold (35) and laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

**Act 6:2-6 ESV** And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. (3) Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. (4) But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

**1Pe 5:2-3 ESV** So I exhort the elders among you.... shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; (3) not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

**Tit 1:7-9 ESV** For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. ... He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.

### **A. Elders - governance of the church**

Acts 6 - Praying, Studying the word, Primary teachers, Oversight of ministry leaders (implied), Identifying, equipping & releasing the ministry team leaders (implied)  
1 Peter 5 & Titus 1- Setting overall vision, Pastoral care, oversight & Discipline, weighing prophecy and mobilising the church in that direction.  
Acts 2 – Signs & Wonders (!), Financial oversight & allocation of budget.

### **B. Ministry leaders**

Input to and Implementation of the vision of the elders, Leading ministry areas, Ministry specific training, equipping the church, pastoral care of the church.

## **2.7 Outworking**

We can see from examining these passages that all of our principles 4 and 5 can be drawn out and defended from scripture. Both men and women must be released in the church to lead under the delegated authority of the elders.

The only possible issue is that of women leading men who are not their husbands. It is unclear from scripture as to whether this was permissible. However, given that the women submit to the headship of their husbands and the leadership of those in authority over them, it would seem that we can maintain this practice within the wider framework of biblical teaching.

### 3.0 Principle 6,7 & 8 Public Contributions

#### 3.1 Passage 4 - 1Corinthians 14:26-40

1Co 14:26-40 ESV What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. (27) If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. (28) But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God. (29) Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. (30) If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. (31) For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, (32) and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. (33) For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. As in all the churches of the saints, (34) the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. (35) If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church. (36) Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached? (37) If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. (38) If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. (39) So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. (40) But all things should be done decently and in order.

This passage is not teaching that women should never speak in church. Paul has already encouraged them to pray and prophecy. What is it teaching?

#### Considerations

a) Context is twofold

1/ prophesy and tongues (starts v1-32 on prophesy and tongues and also again in verse 39).

2/ order and the ‘best way to facilitate a building up environment in the public meeting’<sup>13</sup>

Given these two contexts, it is unlikely that verses 35-36 are on a completely different subject

b) Speaking is not ‘teaching’ – it is a different word which means general speaking

c) Paul can’t be saying silence is an absolute rule – the contradiction to 1 Cor 11 is too strong.

#### Interpretation

- 1) tongues with no interpretation – no building up – so keep silent (Speak to himself and God)
- 2) prophesy but ‘too many prophecies’ – difficult to learn or be encouraged if more than one person speaking at the same time – so keep silent
- 3) women speaking – not told why but we might be able to glean it from Paul’s solution ‘let them ask their husbands at home’. It’s possible that they were either commenting or weighing the prophesies and tongues that were brought OR they were just generally asking questions.

Notice a couple of things. A bit like a teacher in a noisy classroom who tells the disorderly ones ‘silence’ – but if he asks them a question a few minutes later he

<sup>13</sup> Verses 3,6,12,17,19,26,31,33,40 all have to do with order and building up the church

would expect them to speak. The problem is not the speaking but what and how it is being said. This seems to me the best explanation here. It's disorderly speaking that Paul is bringing into order.

Paul provides an opportunity for and encouraged women to learn which was rare in the culture. In Greek meetings women were not allowed to speak at all. Paul allows room for them to contribute in appropriate ways.

Do we have any situations where this applies to us then?

- 'chatting' in public meetings (applies to men equally). mobile phones, incessantly crying babies.

#### **Principles from passage 4**

- it does not mean that women should never speak but 'disorderly chatter' is not allowed
- it does encourage women to learn which was against the cultural norm.

#### **3.2 Passage 5 - 1Ti 2:7-15**

**1Ti 2:7-15 ESV** For this I was appointed a preacher and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. (8) I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling; (9) likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, (10) but with what is proper for women who profess godliness--with good works. (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

#### **Common egalitarian teaching**

- i) Was paul merely stopping **an individual women** from teaching? No – just because he uses 'a woman' does not mean it was one woman. Otherwise, who was 'a man' in the same verse? It would be ridiculously vague – like me calling PJ and saying please stop that woman talking to that man – PJ would reply which woman and which man?
- ii) Was paul merely **stopping uneducated women from teaching**? No – the reason is given in verse 13 – it's dangerous to supply a reason that is not given to replace one that is. Not all women were uneducated and if this had been in Paul's mind what about uneducated men?
- iii) Was paul merely **stopping women teaching heresy**? No – the word teaching is a positive word – not negative. And if that were the case can we assume that ALL the women were teaching heresy and ALL the men were ok? Clearly that is not the case – if heresy had been the issue Paul would have mentioned it.
- iv) Doesn't the word authority have **negative connotations** – 'to murder or commit violence'. Little evidence that this was the case. It wouldn't make sense – is paul saying he doesn't want women to murder men. It's ok to murder other women then – or men to murder men
- v) **Isn't 'authority' a rare word** – how do we know what it means? In this letter Paul uses 65 other words used nowhere else in the NT. We can determine what they mean from other greek literature of the period.

## Interpretation

The key question is this - how extensive is Paul's prohibition when he says, "I permit no woman to teach"? It's **not likely that Paul is saying in 1 Timothy 2:12 that every kind of teaching is forbidden to women.** There are examples of them teaching younger women (Titus 2:3), teaching children (2 Tim 3:14, 2 Tim 1:5), and in some way teaming up with their husbands to give private instruction when someone is confused or uninformed like Apollos (Acts 18:26)

To quote John Piper "Is it possible to generalize, then, about what Paul does have in mind here when he says, "I do not permit a woman to teach"? I think the safest thing to do is let the next phrase guide us. "I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over men." Instead of letting the word "teach" mean anything we want it to mean or think it might mean, it's safer to say, it probably means a kind of teaching that somehow relates to authority. Teach and exercise authority go together. So at least one general thing we can say about women teaching is that Paul forbids it when it is part of the exercise of authority over men."<sup>14</sup>

In deciding in this matter it's important also to look at Paul's reasoning for why women should not teach men. They are twofold

- 1) (13) **For Adam was formed first, then Eve;**
- 2) (14) **and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.**

**The first point is clear** from Paul's other teaching – adam was formed first and this is Paul's classic argument for male headship.

**The second is less clear.** Paul is either saying 'eve was deceived and therefore all women have to pay the price for that' or he is saying 'eve was deceived and this demonstrates that women are more open to deception than men.'

Neither of these interpretations seem satisfying. The first would surely have been redeemed by the cross if it were true – and we see no other curse of this nature elsewhere in scripture. The second is confusing and doesn't 'seem right'. Firstly, if women are more open to deception then what about when they teach other women or children – surely women should NEVER be allowed to teach anyone. Secondly, Paul says that he was concerned that all of the Corinthians would become like Eve (2 cor 11:3). If this is the case in what way are women more open to deception then?

**Notice also that this command for women never to teach men is only in this one verse of scripture** – we don't see it anywhere else. This doesn't negate it but it should make us cautious – for the same reason that we don't baptise people for the dead.

What have we learned then

- i) Paul is concerned about women teaching men when it is related to authority
- ii) Paul is concerned to uphold male headship in the church and home
- iii) Paul has concerns about deception – we know this much but we're unsure why he has these concerns.<sup>15</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> John Piper online sermon on 1 Tim 2 [www.desiringgod.org](http://www.desiringgod.org)

<sup>15</sup> Many interpreters have offered explanations – I haven't seen one that satisfies me yet but I'm still looking!

Can we implement a method of teaching in our local church that upholds Paul's apostolic concerns whilst permitting women to teach men, other women and children? I believe there is

- i) By ensuring that elders do the bulk of the teaching and set the overall 'themes' of teaching for the church. To guard against error it's important that the teaching elders are accountable to the wider eldership team for their teaching. All teaching is of course also subject to scripture and the wider accountability of the Newfrontiers apostolic team.
- ii) Non elders (male and female) are then free to teach given that they are clearly submitted to the eldership. These other teachers must clearly communicate in a way that doesn't usurp the authority of the elders (or if it is a married woman in a way respectful to the authority of her husband). To guard against error it's important that these other teachings are endorsed by the eldership. For example I feel very comfortable with Kirstie taking part of this paper because the teaching has been submitted to the eldership team.

We must now turn to some additional roles that are perhaps less clear from scripture.

### **3.4 Is ‘anchoring’ a governing role?**

The overall governing of the church is clearly an eldership role (1 Peter 5). Weighing of prophecy was clearly the job of the church and the prophets. (1 Cor 14)

What implications does this have for anchoring? It would seem fairly evident from the absence of any indication of a separate ‘anchor’ role in the NT and with Paul’s emphasis on order in the meetings that it’s most likely that this role was performed by the elders (or one of them).

We have created this as a separate role from eldership. Also, we have clearly had a ‘double standard’ in it – allowing male non elders to anchor but not female non elders.

There seems to be 2 clear alternatives, given that the anchoring role must continue in some form for practical reasons.

1/ anchoring becomes an ‘elder only’ role – with perhaps trainee elders sometimes being given the opportunity to anchor.

2/ anchoring becomes a role open to anyone with the appropriate level of gifting but a clear submission to the eldership is recognised.

In defense of option 1/ - this option would most clearly keep the ‘authority’ of the elders on display before the church. Any non elders that anchored would have to clearly be identified to the church and an understanding that they were in training should be widely known so that it is clear that we are not expressing a double standard. The problem with this option is it can give a very ‘male dominated’ appearance to the church and means that women struggle to find suitable role models to follow. It also excludes those who have a particular gifting for hosting meetings from expressing that in the wider church and leaves a very small subset of ‘those elders who have the gifting to anchor’.

In defence of option 2/ - this option would release those gifted men and women to anchor irrespective of their status in the eldership. It would give a more balanced (complementary??) view of church life and demonstrate the role that women can play in the church – giving women role models to aspire to.

The difficulty with this option is that it could lead to a blurring of leadership. ‘who really leads this church’ may be a question left in the minds of those attending that particular service. The first difficulty I think potentially could be overcome with clear communication.

There is a second issue. Having a woman as the anchor person clearly gives a women overall authority in the meeting – it’s difficult to see how this could be justified against both NT practice or Paul’s clear teaching on male-elder leadership. It could be argued that ‘as long as there was an elder present’. But this is difficult to see practically how it would be worked out unless the anchor person runs every decision past the elder who is present. This would defeat the point of it.

If we follow this argument does this exclude non elders (men and women) from anchoring other meetings? I would argue that there is a difference between a smaller meeting and ‘the whole church gathered’. In Acts 6 the apostles “gather all the believers” when appointing new deacons. In [1Co 5:4](#) Paul says “When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus” for a situation requiring church discipline. It’s important that when the whole community is gathered for the appropriate leadership to be seen.

Having given this issue considerable prayer, study and thought and discussed with apostolic oversight we feel that anchoring ‘the gathered church’ should become an eldership plus trainee eldership role.<sup>16</sup>

### 3.5 Outworking

Given the conclusions above, we also feel that we need to be much more intentional in reflecting a ‘complementary’ theology when the church is gathered. This will including bringing female worship leaders<sup>17</sup> through as fast as possible and involving more women in giving announcements and ‘being up front’. The following recommendations would I think help move us forward as a church in this area to ensure that our practice best reflects our theology.

- A. Increase the women up front on Sunday
  - a. Worship leading
  - b. Teaching
  - c. ‘Testimony’ section (and introducing testimonies’)
- B. Break up the men’s club feel where it exists
  - a. Worship leaders meeting – inviting women who are ‘on the road’ to leading on Sunday.
  - b. At major church events ensure women have a prominent role (praying in elders, vision Sunday, Easter, carol service etc)
- C. Communication of the complementary roles
  - a. Teaching on this area (seminars and Sundays)
  - b. Communicating the role of women as ministry leaders, coaches, smallgroup leaders
  - c. Praying for new leaders as they emerge to recognise and commission them.

---

<sup>16</sup> Against this option, some would argue ‘what about in the workplace where a wife is her husbands boss’. But this argument leads nowhere. The church is completely different to the workplace – it has no other parallels. Some people have affairs with their boss at work – should we do that in church also?

<sup>17</sup> It is clear from previous passages we have looked at that Paul encourages women to pray and prophecy and we have agreed that women can also teach under the authority of the eldership. I would suggest that worship leading is no exception in that when carried out under the authority of the eldership this is a gift that can be exercised by men and women, be it a small group setting or on a Sunday. There is no scriptural basis to support the notion that women would not be gifted in leading others into the presence of God as we worship.