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# A Broad Theological Exploration of Women and Ministry: 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Corinthians 14 in Context

## Introduction: A Shared Journey Toward Faithfulness

Few passages of Scripture have stirred more honest questions, careful reflection, and thoughtful conversation than 1 Timothy 2:11–12 and 1 Corinthians 14:34–35. These verses have been wrestled with by sincere believers who genuinely want to obey God. We understand that, and we deeply respect it. Our pastoral team stands shoulder to shoulder with you in an earnest desire to interpret Scripture faithfully and accurately. We know that one day we will all give an account for every word spoken and every decision made as leaders (Matt. 12:36; Rom. 14:12; Eccles. 12:14).

Our goal in what follows is faithfulness to God and careful interpretation of His Word. We are seeking to answer a specific but weighty question: How do these two challenging texts fit within the broader testimony of the New Testament and the larger canon of Scripture as a whole? Our additional purpose is to see what God has said would characterize a new community of believers He called His church—citizens of heaven—and whether this long-awaited new covenant, foretold by the prophets, has any effect on women's involvement.

To do this, we will need to examine a wide range of related questions together. First and foremost, we must carefully assess what the text of Scripture says, being careful not to add to it. This is a solemn command echoed throughout the pages of Scripture, from the warning in Deuteronomy to the closing words of Revelation: we are not to add to God's words (Deut. 4:2; 12:32; Prov. 30:5–6; Rev. 22:18–19). Only then can we rightly ask: Were Paul's restrictions in these passages contextual, addressing specific situations in the first-century church, or were they intended as universal norms for all times and places? Can women teach or hold any authority within the church? Can a woman be a pastor? We will also explore how the doctrine of the priesthood of believers shapes this new community and what God envisioned for it. After all, this is His church, which Jesus Himself created, named, and shepherds as the chief Shepherd over all (1 Pet. 5:4).

To be sure, this study is not a dismissal of difficult texts or a new, progressive way of looking at Paul's writing. It is an invitation to read Paul in his context with a commitment to the whole counsel of God's Word on these topics. We want to look at the rest of Scripture to determine how we form a doctrinal position by examining the full weight of biblical revelation, from the Old Testament prophets to the Gospels and the Epistles. We believe that the difficult texts must be read within the context of the larger story God is telling, and that the Spirit who inspired all of Scripture guides us into all truth when we approach His Word with humility and prayer.

The direct references before us are these:

### *1 Timothy 2:11–12*

*11 A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. 12 But I do not allow a woman to instruct or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.*

### *1 Corinthians 14:34–35*

*34 The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says. 35 If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.*

We would love for you to open your Bible as you read through this document, examine the text, and search the heart of God on these matters with us, and so we ask you to join us in thoroughly researching these things—not with a spirit of contention, but with a shared desire to obey God. In all things, let us be prayerful, bearing the fruit of the Holy Spirit and walking in Christlike character. We do not claim to have exhausted these mysteries. We offer what we have learned, tested against Scripture and history, in the hope that together we might grow in wisdom, love, and faithful obedience.

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Thank you in advance for taking the time to prayerfully explore these things with us.

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### The Hermeneutical Stakes: Situational vs. Universal

Hermeneutics is the science and art of interpreting Scripture; it provides the principles and rules necessary to determine an author's intended meaning. One of these rules involves asking whether the text you're reading is time-bound and situational, or transcendent and universal. Is it normative and binding for all time? Or is it situational, responding to a specific need at the time? These have always been very important questions; they are foundational to understanding the Bible and have guided interpreters for thousands of years (Fee 312–328).

Consider with us some obvious examples:

- Paul asked Timothy to bring his cloak and parchments (2 Tim. 4:13). Pastors today do not claim this as a permanent liturgical requirement.
- The "holy kiss" (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 1 Pet. 5:14) was a first-century Mediterranean greeting signaling brotherhood and acceptance. It expressed timeless fellowship, but the cultural packaging was temporary.
- Paul advised wine for stomach ailments (1 Tim. 5:23), but we do not treat this as a universal remedy.
- Head coverings for women in prayer (1 Cor. 11:5–16) and uncovered heads for men (vv. 4–7) were tied to Greco-Roman codes of honor and shame. Evangelical scholars across the spectrum recognize this as culturally embedded instruction (Keener 19–69).
- Slavery commands (Eph. 6; 1 Tim. 6) addressed a universal first-century institution without endorsing its permanence.
- Widow enrollment rules (1 Tim. 5:9–10) managed a specific Greco-Roman social welfare crisis.
- Jesus' command not to preach to Gentiles (Matt. 10) was tactical and temporary, which he himself overturned in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19).
- The Jerusalem Council's food decrees (Acts 15) were a first century "peace treaty" between Jewish and Gentile believers so they could share meals together, later dismantled as the "wall of separation" fell (Col. 2).

Context matters. Historical context. Cultural context. Linguistic context. These are not enemies of biblical authority; they are the very tools God gave us to hear His voice accurately. The question before us is not whether we will take Paul seriously. The question is whether we will take Paul seriously enough to read him on his own terms (Towner 159–178). We invite you to join us now as we begin examining the first text in question

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## A Broad Theological Exploration of Women and Ministry: 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Corinthians 14 in Context

### 1 Timothy 2:11-12: A Blanket Prohibition?

*1 Timothy 2:11–12 11 A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. 12 But I do not allow a woman to instruct or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet.*

We come first to 1 Timothy 2:11–12, which speaks of a woman not being allowed "to instruct or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet." Many faithful believers have read these words as a blanket prohibition for all time, in every church, in every culture. And we must acknowledge the sincerity of that reading; no one who loves Scripture takes these verses lightly.

But here is what invites us to pause and look closer. If this is indeed a universal, unqualified restriction for all women everywhere, Paul appears to live and teach in ways that sit uncomfortably beside that conclusion. For example, repeatedly and in the full view of the churches, he commends women who instruct, who lead, and who labor alongside him in the very work he calls the ministry of the gospel. The same apostle who writes that he does not allow a woman "to instruct or exercise authority" also writes women's names with honor, sends them with authority, and seems to assume their public voice without contradiction.

So, we are left with a choice. We can flatten the text to fit a tidy rule, or we can ask whether we have heard Paul fully—whether the Spirit, through his broader witness, is inviting us into something more textured than a simple ban, something more faithful than a forced inconsistency. Let us walk through the evidence together, not to win an argument, but to understand our brother Paul more truly. His own practice, his other letters, and the witness of the New Testament community await our careful attention. Let us turn to them now.

### Phoebe: The Deacon and Patron

In Romans 16:1, Paul introduces Phoebe as a "diakonos" of the church at Cenchreae. The word means "deacon," and it is the same masculine-gendered title he applies to male leaders elsewhere, including Timothy himself (1 Tim. 4:6). We cannot dismiss this role as somehow "light" or peripheral to church leadership. Deacons were church leaders with authority to conduct ministry. For support, consider Acts 6:3, where the first deacons were required to be "full of the Spirit and wisdom," or 1 Timothy 3:8–10, where they must be "worthy of respect," "sincere," "tested and proven," "able to hold the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience," and "above accusation." These are the marks of genuine leadership exercised over both men and women.

The fact that Paul himself named a woman, Phoebe, to leadership in this office is significant because it demonstrates his willingness to let a woman hold an authority position within the church. In Romans 16:2, he also calls Phoebe a *prostatís*—a term that means leadership, protection, and patronal authority (Keener 241–44). Phoebe was named as the letter carrier to Rome, which means she would have been the one to read Paul's words publicly to the congregation. This is a role of immense trust and public speaking authority. Certainly, he would not have done this if he never permitted a woman to speak anywhere. These things must be weighed in the evidence.

### Junia: Outstanding Among the Apostles

In Romans 16:7, Paul sends greetings to Andronicus and Junia, who are "outstanding among the apostles." This is not merely a polite way to close a letter; it is either a declaration that Junia held apostolic status or that she was esteemed by the apostles—either way, it is one of the highest commendations in the early church.

We should look carefully at what Paul writes here. The Greek phrase *episēmoi en tois apostolois* admits two grammatically possible readings. It could be in the "dative" case and exclusive: "well known to the apostles," meaning the apostles simply knew and thought highly of them. Or it could be "locative": "outstanding AMONG the apostles," and inclusive, meaning they

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are counted as apostles. Context seems to favor the "locative". Further, a parallel construction in 2 Corinthians 11:5 and 12:11, where Paul speaks of "super-apostles," suggests he uses such language to denote standing within a recognized group, not merely reputation before it (Wright 133–134). Moreover, the pairing with Andronicus—likely her husband or brother—functions as a standard Pauline co-ministry formula, much like Priscilla and Aquila, implying shared status and function.

If Junia was an apostle, the implications for 1 Timothy 2:11–12 are direct. Paul defines apostleship in 1 Corinthians 12:28 and Ephesians 4:11 as a foundational gift of the church, with apostles and prophets forming the very base. An apostle is, by definition, one sent with authoritative testimony and teaching. The apostolic circle in Acts 1:21–22 is expanded by Paul's own ministry (1 Cor. 15:8–11), and he clearly regards his apostolic commission as including the authority to command, correct, and establish churches across gender and ethnic lines. To recognize Junia as apostle while maintaining a blanket prohibition on women teaching or exercising authority creates a tension that requires explanation—not dismissal (Keener 241–244). We do not raise this to dismiss 1 Timothy 2:11–12, but to hear it alongside the full witness of Paul's ministry, where women such as Junia appear not as exceptions to his theology, but as exemplars of it.

### Prophetic Instruction Given by Paul

It should be mentioned that in 1 Corinthians 11, Paul himself gives instruction on the way both men and women should publicly pray and prophesy in the gathered church. The text assumes women are already praying and prophesying publicly as a regular practice (Fee, 501-506). What is prophecy? It is the public, inspired declaration of God's words to His people—the most authoritative speech act in all of Scripture. If God has entrusted women with His very voice, and Paul has instructed these women in the details of how to communicate it, then why would we universally prohibit what God has entrusted and Paul has instructed?

The New Testament demonstrates women speaking for God again and again. For example, in Luke's gospel, we meet Anna, who spoke of the child Jesus to all who looked for redemption in Jerusalem (Luke 2:36). In Acts, we find the four daughters of Philip, who prophesied and whose words carried such weight that Paul lingered with them, eager to hear what the Spirit had said (Acts 21:8–9). We see the women of Corinth, whom Paul himself addresses as they pray and prophesy alongside their brothers (1 Cor. 11:5). And yes, in Revelation, we even read of the Thyatiran prophetess, whom Jesus rebukes not for speaking, but for speaking wrongly (Rev. 2:20). In every case, the issue is never whether a woman should voice God's word, but whether she voices it faithfully. In all these examples, we see the Spirit does not discriminate by gender when He fills a mouth with His words.

### Priscilla: A Teacher of Apollos and Endorsed by Paul

In Acts 18, we find Priscilla and Aquila encounter Apollos, a gifted male preacher whose understanding is nevertheless incomplete. The text tells us that both took him aside and "explained to him the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:26). The verb *ektithēmi* (middle voice, *exethento*) is not casual conversation. It denotes systematic exposition, laying out a matter in detail—the same root used for "expound" or "set forth." In the Septuagint, it describes Moses explaining God's law (Deut. 1:5). Luke uses it here for doctrinal correction and completion. Here it is, plainly: theological instruction offered to a man by a woman.

The woman is not hidden in the background but named as an equal partner in the teaching. Some have tried to soften this by suggesting Priscilla merely assisted while Aquila led, but the evidence itself resists such a reading. In Paul's own letters, Priscilla is listed before her husband four out of six times—a deliberate reversal of cultural convention that signals her greater recognition in the church and primary authority in their shared ministry (Bauckham 165–182). In addition, the Greek is explicit: *prosēlabonto autous* — "they took him [Apollos] aside." The plural subject is Priscilla and Aquila; the verb is active and shared. Luke could have written "Aquila took him aside, and Priscilla listened," or used a participial construction subordinating

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her. He does not. The narrative grammar presents them as co-agents of instruction. This seems to have been no problem for both Luke and Paul (Belleville 135–137).

In summary, we do not elevate her above Aquila, nor do we diminish her beneath him. We simply recognize what the text plainly shows: a woman and her husband, side by side, opening the Scriptures more fully to a man who needed what they together had received.

### The New Covenant Explosion: What Paul say About Old Hierarchies

We come now to a word from the apostle Paul that has the power to rearrange our entire imagination for what the church is supposed to be. Writing to the Galatians, he says this: "*There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus*" (Gal. 3:28). It is a short sentence, but do not let its brevity fool you. It is universal in its application. It is the "basic principle" that guides what the church is to look like. All apparent restrictions elsewhere in Paul's letters should be understood in relation to it, not vice versa. Paul is doing something radical here—he is dismantling the very hierarchies that ordered the ancient world: the ethnic divisions that kept peoples apart, the class distinctions that kept some serving and others being served, and yes, the gender boundaries that determined who could speak and who must remain silent. In Christ, he says, these have come down.

This was not Paul's invention; it was the Spirit's long-promised work, whispered centuries earlier through the prophet Joel. "In the last days," Joel promised, "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and daughters shall prophesy. Your male servants and female servants, I will pour out my Spirit in those days" (Joel 2:28–29). Notice who is included. Not only the expected voices — the sons, the freeborn, the privileged, but the daughters. The servants. The ones the old order would have overlooked. Peter stood on the day of Pentecost and declared: this is now reality (Acts 2:16–18). The democratization of the Spirit has arrived. The new covenant has come. Paul, standing in that same stream of the Spirit, drives the point home with pastoral urgency. He is not writing abstract theology for seminary debate. He is writing to churches torn by the old divisions, pleading with them to recognize what the Spirit has already accomplished. "You are all one in Christ Jesus." Not one kind. Not one role. Not one voice. But one — equally heirs, equally members, equally gifted by the same Spirit who shows no partiality. The Kingdom of God, Paul insists, operates on power dynamics the world simply does not recognize, and that, for every daughter who has ever wondered whether her voice matters to God, is very good news indeed (Porter 89–104).

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### Why Did Paul Write 1 Timothy 2:11–12? The Ephesian Crisis

If Paul is not writing a universal rule requiring female silence, what is he doing? The answer lies buried in the specific historical and cultural context of first-century Ephesus, a context well documented.

#### The "New Roman Woman" and the Artemis Cult

Ephesus was not like any other Roman city. It was a city dominated by the temple of Artemis, one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World, whose cult saturated every layer of civic, economic, and religious life (Rogers 152–178). In the mid-first century, a social revolution known among scholars as the "New Roman Woman" movement was sweeping through the empire's wealthy urban centers, including Ephesus. Roman legal reforms had granted women unprecedented property rights and financial independence, producing a class of elite women who discarded traditional modesty, demanded public authority, rejected marriage and motherhood, and exerted dominance in social and religious settings (Baugh 13–33).

The Artemis cult amplified this dynamic. Artemis was celebrated as the "Protector of Women" and a midwife goddess, yet she was fiercely independent, living apart from men. In her mythology, female superiority was doctrinal. Women served as primary religious leaders. Local myths even taught that woman was created first and was the source of "divine knowledge" for man (Arnold 34–56). When Paul writes that "Adam was formed first, then Eve," he is not delivering a generic biology lesson. He is surgically refuting a specific Ephesian creation myth that had infiltrated the church.

#### The Evidence in the Text Itself

Paul's language reveals the specificity of the crisis. In 2:12, he uses the rare Greek word "*authentēo*" to describe the type of authority woman in the Ephesian church are expressing. This word occurs nowhere else in the entire Bible. Its roots describe a "self-actor" or "perpetrator," often associated with violence, disruption, and usurping control (Wolters 719–29). In a city where the Artemis cult celebrated female dominance and where wealthy women were "playing the master" over men, Paul's choice of this razor-sharp, unusual word makes sense: He is not banning women from legitimate authority. He is slamming the brakes on a specific group of women who were hijacking the church through domineering, self-appointed control (Wilshire 45–78).

The evidence compounds. In 1 Timothy 5:13, Paul describes younger widows who are "idle, going from house to house... gossips and busybodies, saying what they should not." Note the phrase "house to house"—precisely where first-century churches gathered. The women he is referencing are the same elite Ephesian women using the church's house network to spread disruptive ideas influenced by the cult of Artemis (the "myths and endless genealogies" Paul himself condemns in 1:4). Acts 19 confirms the atmosphere: the riot at Ephesus was sparked by fear that Paul's gospel would discredit Artemis, whose cult was served by powerful priestesses and high-ranking women. Acts 17:4 notes that "prominent women" were among the early converts—the exact demographic most susceptible to importing Artemis-influenced power structures into the church. When Paul commands these women to "learn in quietness" (*hēsychia*), he is not sentencing all women to perpetual silence. He is stopping a hostile takeover by an identifiable faction whose "house to house" meddling threatened to destabilize a young church before it could take root.

#### Paul's Appeal to Genesis in 1 Timothy 2:13

Coming out of 1 Timothy 2:11–12, many appeal to Paul's use of Genesis in 2:13—"Adam was formed first, then Eve"—as proof that his restriction is rooted in pre-fall creation design and therefore permanent. However, this is difficult to sustain because Paul uses the exact same "creation logic" in 1 Corinthians 11 to mandate that women wear physical head coverings in church. There, he explicitly ties the veil to the fact that "man was not made from woman, but woman from man" (1 Cor. 11:8). If the Genesis appeal in Timothy creates a timeless prohibition, then the Genesis appeal in Corinthians must do the same, but few

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conservative churches today enforce head coverings as a universal creation-order mandate. To enforce "creation order" regarding teaching while ignoring it regarding veils is a double standard (Fee 312–328).

### 1 Corinthians 14: The Corinthian Exception, Not the Universal Rule

Some also appeal to 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 as a blanket prohibition. It says, "*The women are to keep silent in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but are to subject themselves, just as the Law also says. If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is improper for a woman to speak in church.*" It is important to note that in the very same letter, in chapter 11, Paul explicitly affirms women praying and prophesying in church. As was mentioned previously, prophecy is authoritative public speech. Paul cannot mean a universal, eternal ban on women speaking in church because he just finished teaching them *how* to speak *when* they speak. To forbid all women from speaking while simultaneously instructing them on how to speak does not make any sense, because the apostle would not contradict himself. So, the Corinthian restriction must have been addressing specific problems in a specific congregation—likely wives interrupting with questions in a culture where public rhetoric was tied to social status (Keener 70–100).

Women were often less educated, so this "house-to-house" interrogation (to borrow his language from 1 Timothy 5:13) would have turned worship into chaos. This makes contextual sense given Paul's desire for "orderly worship." The phrase *idios* ("your own") is emphatic: deal with your domestic questions domestically, not by disrupting the public proclamation of God's Word. This is the same *hēsychia* ("quietness") Paul commands in 1 Timothy 2:11—not the silence of subjugation, but the attentiveness of discipleship. He is not rendering a verdict on female voices forever; he is installing a temporary guardrail against a specific Corinthian problem of disorder, protecting the primacy of intelligible, edifying speech for which he has just argued with such painstaking care. In other words, Paul's correction was tactical, not a rule for all churches for all time.

### Paul's Vocabulary: The Same Words for the Same Work

Perhaps the most compelling evidence against a gender-hierarchical reading is Paul's own linguistic practice. He uses identical Greek terms for male and female ministry partners, with no semantic distinction:

Term	Meaning	Women	Men
<i>Synergos</i>	Fellow Worker / Co-Laborer	Prisca & Aquila: "my <i>synergoi</i> in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 16:3)	Timothy: "my <i>synergos</i> " (Rom. 16:21)
<i>Diakonos</i>	Deacon / Minister	Phoebe: "a <i>diakonos</i> of the church" (Rom. 16:1)	Timothy: "you will be a good <i>diakonos</i> of Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 4:6)
<i>Kopiaō</i>	To Labor Hard	Mary: "who <i>ekopiāsen</i> for you" (Rom. 16:6)	Stephanas & team: those who <i>kopiōnti</i> (1 Cor. 16:16)
<i>Apostolos</i>	Apostle	Junia: "outstanding among the <i>apostolois</i> " (Rom. 16:7)	Paul: "Paul, an <i>apostolos</i> " (Gal. 1:1)
<i>Prostatis / Proistēmi</i>	Patron / Leader	Phoebe: a <i>prostatis</i> to many (Rom. 16:2)	Church leaders: "those who <i>proistamenous</i> you in the Lord" (1 Thess. 5:12)

### The Irony of the Missing Office

There is another observation that we want to make, and it is so obvious that its omission in most debates is almost inexplicable: Neither 1 Timothy 2:11–12 nor 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 is contextually about the office of pastor. Not at all. This is fascinating because these verses have been enlisted by many people to support church constitutional bylaws against the female pastorate, even though the text itself never raises the subject of pastoring. Therefore, to read them as blanket prohibitions on women holding the title of "pastor" is to import a modern agenda into a first-century letter where it simply does not appear.

Consider the context of **1 Timothy 2**. Before Paul ever mentions women, he opens the chapter with instructions about prayer. He urges that "supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions" (2:1–2). He wants the men to pray, "lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling" (2:8). Then, and only then, does he turn to women and their conduct "in like manner"—modest apparel, not with braided hair or gold or pearls, but with good works (2:9–10). This makes perfect sense in keeping with what has already been said about the "New Roman Woman" and the Artemis cult, because this is how such women adorned themselves. But contextually, the entire flow of the passage is about how believers comport themselves in prayer gatherings, not about who may hold ordained offices. The house-church setting of Ephesus makes this even clearer: these were informal assemblies in courtyards and atria, where passersby could overhear the proceedings, and where disorderly behavior by any party raised the risk of political harassment. Paul is managing a specific worship crisis, not drafting a job description for church leadership (Towner 159–78).

Importing a prohibition of female pastors into this text seems to violate one of the most fundamental rules of biblical interpretation (hermeneutics): namely, the distinction between exegesis and eisegesis. Exegesis (from the Greek *exēgēsis*, meaning "to lead out") is the disciplined practice of drawing meaning out of the text—carefully examining what the original author intended to communicate to the original audience, based on the words, grammar, historical context, cultural context, and literary structure that are present. It submits the interpreter to the text, allowing Scripture to say what it says without coercion or embellishment. Eisegesis, by contrast, is the practice of reading meaning into the text—inserting ideas, assumptions, or agendas from outside and forcing them upon the passage, regardless of whether the words support such a reading. It makes the interpreter master over the text rather than its servant. To apply this distinction here: First Timothy 2 addresses women learning in quietness and not usurping authority over a man in the Ephesian congregation, where false teaching and cultic disruption were serious problems. Applying the modern pastoral office directly to this passage seems to go beyond the specific issue Paul appears to be addressing in context.

**1 Corinthians 14** is equally distant from the question of pastoral office. The entire chapter is about the orderly use of spiritual gifts when the assembly comes together. Paul regulates prayer, tongues, prophecy, interpretation, and revelation—all exercised by the congregation at large, not by an ordained clergy class. "*When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation*" (14:26). This is the whole body functioning as one. Into that context, Paul addresses a specific disruption—likely wives calling out questions to their husbands across the room—and installs a temporary boundary: "*If they want to inquire about something, let them ask their own husbands at home*" (14:35). As stated earlier, the instruction is tactical, contextual only for Corinth, and explicitly limited to a particular example of disorder. To interpret this as a universal ban on women serving as pastors seems to make Paul say something in this passage he never said, about an office he never mentioned, in a letter concerned with an entirely different problem. Exegesis demands that we let the passage speak on its own terms; eisegesis allows us to make it speak on ours.

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We say this gently, as those who have ourselves wrestled with these texts and who know the weight of conscience that comes with handling God's Word. We are not accusing anyone of bad faith. We are inviting you to return to the text with fresh eyes and ask: Did Paul really say what we have assumed he said? The answer, we believe, will surprise us—and perhaps free us.

### **What the Evidence Does and Does Not Show**

A study of the New Testament terminology related to shepherding, oversight, and pastoral ministry reveals that no passage explicitly prohibits women from serving in what we call pastoral ministry. Neither does it say that she should, but it is worth asking what the evidence does show and then making an inference to the best explanation. The New Testament reveals—abundantly and clearly—that women and men alike are involved in prophecy and teaching, in apostleship and deaconship, in public speaking and evangelism, in patronage and discipleship. We do not claim that each of these roles is identical to the office of pastor, and we agree that this does not settle the question one way or the other. We simply observe that women took a very involved, proactive leadership role within the early church, and that Paul himself affirmed and supported this in action.

Because Scripture is silent on the very specific point of the pastorate, we are weighing all the evidence. If the Bible nowhere forbids women from exercising Spirit-given authority, speaking God's Word, and helping to shepherd His people—but everywhere else affirms them in doing so—then a prohibition against women speaking in the church or helping to shepherd a community is troubling. It is an argument based on silence and inference that closes doors rather than opens them. On the contrary, if the New Covenant in Christ demonstrates a direction toward opening doors that removes distinctions like Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female (Gal. 3:28), then following this direction for God's new community makes the most sense. Why would we not follow it?

### **What about “Husband of One Wife?”**

Another text sometimes used as an objection to women in pastoral leadership is found in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 where Paul lists the qualifications for overseers. He says they must be “the husband of one wife.” This would seem to imply that overseers must be male, except that Paul applies the exact same phrase to qualify deacons a few verses later in 3:12, while at the same time endorsing Phoebe as a deacon in the book of Romans. It should be noted that the term “deacon” is the same masculine-gendered title and the same office in both 1 Timothy and in Romans.

If “husband of one wife” is a timeless gender lock on all church leadership, then Paul seems to have committed a contradiction within his own rule. For that reason, a far more coherent reading is that Paul is using the culturally available language of his day to describe moral character and faithfulness in marriage—not drafting a modern church policy with gender exclusions (Belleville 35–103).

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### The Headship Analogy: A Logical Construct, not a Theological Argument

One of the most persistent arguments against women in pastoral ministry relies not on what Paul says about the church, but on what he says about the home. Some draw a straight line from Ephesians 5—where Paul writes, "*Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior*" (5:22–23)—to the governance structure of the church, asserting that just as the husband leads the household, so male elders must lead the congregation. The logic appears compelling at first glance: if God ordained male headship in the most foundational human institution, surely that pattern extends to the church, which is also called a "household" (oikos) of faith.

Here is where we must pause and look more carefully together. The problem with this argument is not that it is illogical—it is, in fact, quite coherent. The concern is that it reaches beyond what the text itself is teaching. It is eisegesis of the most subtle kind because it imports a doctrinal connection the biblical writers themselves do not make.

### The Biblical Prohibition Against Adding to God's Word

This brings us to a concern that runs deeper than any single passage. Before examining Ephesians 5 itself, we want to establish why this kind of reasoning matters so profoundly. Scripture warns repeatedly against adding to or subtracting from what God has revealed:

- "*You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you*" (Deut. 4:2).
- "*Everything that I command you, you shall be careful to do. You shall not add to it or take from it*" (Deut. 12:32).
- "*Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar*" (Prov. 30:5–6).
- "*I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book*" (Rev. 22:18).

These are covenantal boundary markers. When God speaks, His words are complete. To supplement divine revelation with logical deductions and make them binding or normative—even elegant, culturally intuitive ones—is to place human reasoning on par with inspired text. We say this gently, but with conviction: every generation of God's people has been tempted to fortify Scripture with arguments that feel right, and every generation has had to learn again that God's Word needs no supplementation.

Is this not what Jesus himself confronted? The Pharisees built elaborate fences around the law, citing tradition as their authority, yet their traditions — however sincerely held, however biblically dressed — became the very mechanism by which they set aside the commands of God. "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions" (Mark 7:9). They were not rejecting Scripture; they were supplementing it, confident that their deductions honored the text. Jesus called it what it was: the word of God made void by the word of man (Mark 7:13). We do not charge bad faith. We simply ask: when human reasoning erects barriers that God's own words do not, whose voice is speaking?

### The Missing Link: Where the Apostles Never Go

This careful reading of Ephesians 5 raises an important question: if Paul intended marital headship to govern the church, where do the apostles make that connection? At best, such a link is inferred by later interpreters. Yet across the entire New

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Testament, no writer ever applies the husband-as-head paradigm to church leadership structures. Not once—not in the Pastoral Epistles, not in Acts, not in the General Epistles, not in the Gospels.

This silence is even more striking when we consider how Paul describes the church. When he writes to the Colossians, notice what he says: *"Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts"* (Col. 3:16, NIV). He is speaking to the whole church—both men and women, without distinction. This verse presents two interconnected dimensions of spiritual transformation: teaching and singing emerge as the primary means through which God's Word establishes itself richly in believers. The invitation is inclusive, participatory, and open to all. This vision of shared ministry makes complete sense against the backdrop of what Joel promised the New Covenant would look like: *"I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions"* (Joel 2:28, NIV). God pouring out His Spirit on all flesh.

What makes this even more significant is that in the very next verses, Paul still makes categorical distinctions about the home. He says: *"Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them. Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged"* (Col. 3:18–21, NIV). Paul has no trouble giving distinctive instruction in the context of the household across multiple letters and in multiple ways. But when he speaks about the nature of the church, these categories are addressed in radically different terms. To be sure, the apostles frequently name Christ as "head" of the church—His body—but this is never applied to men in a pastoral office.

### The Priesthood of All Believers: A Theological Earthquake

There is something even deeper here, and it takes us to the very heart of what Christ accomplished. If the church is a new creation, then we must ask: what kind of community has Christ made his church into? The answer is one that confers upon all believers—male and female alike—the most sacred office in Israel's religious life: the priesthood.

Let us turn from Paul to the Apostle Peter. In 1 Peter 2, he writes with remarkable force: *"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light"* (1 Pet. 2:9). The pronoun "you" here is corporate and inclusive, encompassing the entire community of believers. Peter does not write, *"The men among you are a royal priesthood, and the women are... something else."* He addresses the whole church, and the priesthood language he employs is a profound theological redefinition of identity in Christ. It is new creation!

The significance of this is tremendous. In the Old Testament, the priesthood was restricted to one tribe, one gender, and one family line. To be a priest was to stand in the presence of God, to offer sacrifices, to mediate between the divine and the human, to teach the law, and to lead worship. It was the highest religious office in Israel, and it was exclusively male. The New Testament, however, opens this up in remarkable ways. The Apostle John sees the redeemed multitude and declares, *"You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth"* (Rev. 5:10). Again, the "them" is universal—drawn from "every tribe and language and people and nation" (Rev. 5:9), and necessarily inclusive of women, who constitute half of humanity and half of the church.

Paul reinforces this democratization when he writes to the Corinthians, *"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God?"* (1 Cor. 6:19). If every believer's body is a temple, then every believer functions in a priestly capacity, offering spiritual sacrifices and accessing the presence of God directly. The author of Hebrews makes this explicit: *"Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name"* (Heb. 13:15). The "us" is unrestricted. The sacrifice is offered by the whole priestly community.

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This invites us to consider an important theological question. If women are excluded from pastoral leadership based on gender, then consistency would suggest they must also be excluded from the priesthood, for the pastoral office is fundamentally a priestly function—teaching, shepherding, mediating God's Word, leading worship, and caring for God's temple, the church. Yet Scripture explicitly calls both men and women priests (1 Pet. 2:9). It consecrates them to the same sacred space. To deny women the pastoral office while simultaneously acknowledging their priesthood raises a significant theological tension. Either the priesthood of believers means something, or it does not. If it means that all believers—regardless of gender, ethnicity, or class—have direct access to God, spiritual authority, and sacred responsibility, then the pastoral office cannot be withheld from women without denying the very identity Scripture confers upon them.

We are inclined to conclude Paul believed this. When he names Phoebe a deacon (Rom. 16:1), when he honors Priscilla as a co-laborer who corrected Apollos's theology (Acts 18:26), when he recognizes Euodia and Syntyche as fellow workers who "labored side by side with me in the gospel" (Phil. 4:2–3)—he is not making exceptions to a male-only rule. He is operating out of a theology where the Spirit distributes gifts and callings without regard to gender, because the priesthood of all believers has rendered such distinctions obsolete in Christ.

The evidence does not stop there. Consider Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis, all praised for "working very hard in the Lord" (Rom. 16:6, 12). Consider Lois and Eunice, Timothy's grandmother and mother, who "taught" him the sacred writings, passing down the faith that Paul would later commission (2 Tim. 1:5). This is Paul regarding women as indispensable co-architects of the gospel movement.

This brings us to yet another line of evidence, one that confirms what we have just seen from the priesthood. If gender distinctions were truly a part of God's design for church leadership, then we should expect to find them precisely where the New Testament defines ministry roles and spiritual gifts. We do not.

Consider Ephesians 4:11–12, where Paul declares that Christ "gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ" (NIV). There is no restriction of shepherds and teachers to males here—no gendered qualification whatsoever.

Consider 1 Corinthians 12, where Paul expounds the body of Christ with meticulous care. *"To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good"* (1 Cor. 12:7, ESV). *"All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills"* (1 Cor. 12:11, ESV). *"Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues"* (1 Cor. 12:27–28, ESV). The Spirit's distribution is sovereign, personal, and purposeful. Yet nowhere does Paul interrupt this theology to say, "But of course, the Spirit only appoints men to the first three offices."

Consider Romans 12:6–8: *"Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness."* Again, no gender boundary.

The "royal priesthood" is the present reality of every believer's identity, and it carries with it the authority to minister, lead, teach, and shepherd. All are recipients of the promise declared in Acts 1:8: *"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth"* (NIV). And who were the first witnesses commissioned to bear witness of the resurrection of Jesus himself? Women! (Luke 24:9–10, NIV). The very first preachers of the resurrection were women.

### The Logical vs. The Theological

We understand that the headship analogy in Ephesians 5 seems logical. One can construct a syllogism: (1) God ordained male headship in the household; (2) the church is called a household; (3) therefore, male headship should extend to the church. The inference seems neat, tidy, and intellectually satisfying—but our attempts at logic are not the standard for biblical theology. Consider the serpent's argument in Genesis 3: *"You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil"* (Gen. 3:4–5). Every premise was true; the conclusion was disastrous. We do not mean to compare anyone to a serpent. We simply want to say that human reason alone is not sufficient grounds for establishing a primary doctrine. It elevates human logic to the status of divine command. It binds the conscience of believers with a "thus saith the Lord" that the Lord never uttered. In addition, it excludes women whom the Spirit has gifted and called. It contradicts the explicit pattern of Paul's ministry, where women like Priscilla, Phoebe, Junia, and Euodia exercised the same titles, performed the same labor, and carried the same authority as their male counterparts. In summary, theological conclusions should remain anchored in the explicit witness of Scripture. Human logic untethered from divine revelation becomes speculation, and speculation becomes presumption.

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### The Trajectory of Redemption: A Journey Through ALL Scripture

Before we examine more specific texts, we want to invite you on a journey through the broader narrative of Scripture. When we read the Bible not as a collection of isolated verses but as the unfolding story of God's redemptive plan, we see something remarkable: a trajectory that moves humanity ever closer to God's original intent. From Genesis to Revelation, God is slowly, deliberately, and sometimes painfully dismantling the human biases that sin has erected—of class, of ethnicity, of gender, of power—and drawing us back toward the harmony of Eden, where male and female, both created in His image, were commissioned together as co-stewards of the world He had made. Genesis 1:27–28 makes this plain: both were blessed, both were told to be fruitful, both were given dominion.

This not a new way of looking at the text. It is the text itself, read canonically and Christologically, watching God's redemptive plan unfold for new creation in the new covenant—a plan in which we are now actively participating and contributing as His image-bearers and co-mission holders.

Jesus teaches us to pray, *"Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven"* (Matthew 6:10, NIV). That prayer reveals a gap between the way things are and the way God intends them to be. The entire biblical narrative is the story of God closing that gap—not by erasing difference, but by redeeming relationship. He is moving us back toward creational intent: man and woman, both bearing His image, both filled with His Spirit, both called to labor together in the stewardship of His kingdom.

We will begin this journey where the New Covenant begins—with Jesus Himself. We will also examine more of Paul's writing, and then we will work our way backward into the Old Testament because Jesus is the lens through which all Scripture must be read. What we will find is an ancient pattern: God has always used women in remarkable ways, and the coming of Christ did not restrain that pattern. It unleashed it.

### The Example of Jesus: A Revolution in Female Dignity

If the New Testament letters provide the theological framework for women's ministry, the Gospels provide the living demonstration. Jesus of Nazareth does not merely permit women to participate in His movement; He fundamentally restructures the social and religious architecture of His world to elevate their status, honor their voices, and commission them as witnesses to the greatest event in human history. To understand the apostle Paul's later practice, we must first understand his Lord's precedent. Jesus is inaugurating a kingdom where the last would be first, and the excluded would be welcomed to the table.

### Jesus and the Unclean: Touching What Religion Rejected

The Gospels record Jesus' encounters with women in states of ritual impurity—encounters that would have rendered any other rabbi ceremonially defiled and socially disgraced. In Luke 8:43–48, a woman who had suffered from a discharge of blood for twelve years—making her perpetually unclean according to Levitical law (Lev. 15:25–27)—pressed through the crowd and touched the fringe of His garment. Rather than rebuke her for defiling Him, Jesus stopped the entire procession and called her forward publicly. *"Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace"* (Luke 8:48). The term "daughter" (*thygater*) was a declaration of restored covenant status. This woman, excluded from the assembly for over a decade, was reinstated as a full member of God's family by the Messiah's own word.

In John 8:1–11, Jesus confronted the scribes and Pharisees who brought a woman caught in adultery, demanding stoning according to the Law of Moses. His response—*"Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her"* (John 8:7)—dismantled not only their trap but the entire patriarchal structure that used women as objects of public spectacle while excusing male complicity. *"Neither do I condemn you; go, and from now on sin no more"* (John 8:11). Jesus did not

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minimize her sin; He maximized her dignity. The accusers slunk away. The woman remained, forgiven and commissioned to new life.

In Luke 7:36–50, Jesus permitted a “woman of the city, who was a sinner”—likely a prostitute—to anoint His feet with ointment, weep over them, and wipe them with her hair. Simon the Pharisee recoiled: *“If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner”* (Luke 7:39). Jesus answered with a parable about debt and gratitude, then turned to the woman and declared, *“Your sins are forgiven... Your faith has saved you; go in peace”* (Luke 7:48, 50). In a culture where a woman’s hair was considered a source of sexual temptation and her touch a contamination, Jesus received her worship as pure devotion. He accepted what religion rejected.

### Jesus and Divorce: Covenant Fidelity and Its Implications for Women

We must be clear at the outset: Jesus’ teaching on divorce in Matthew 19:3–9 and Mark 10:2–12 is not primarily “about women.” It is about marriage, covenant faithfulness, and the creational design of God. Jesus was speaking to men and women alike about the sanctity of a union that reflects Christ and the church. Yet we cannot ignore what Jesus—who, as God incarnate, knew every cultural nuance, every power imbalance, every systemic injustice of His world—fully understood about the implications of His words for women.

Under Jewish law, a man could divorce his wife simply by giving her a certificate of divorce (Deuteronomy 24:1). The rabbinical schools debated the grounds—Hillel permitted divorce for trivial reasons, while Shammai restricted it to sexual immorality—but neither school questioned the man’s exclusive right to initiate dissolution. Women had no corresponding legal standing. A divorced woman in first-century Judea faced catastrophic consequences: loss of home, loss of economic support, loss of social standing, and often descent into poverty or prostitution. The certificate of divorce was a unilateral act of male power that could destroy a woman’s life, not a mutual separation.

When the Pharisees tested Jesus, asking, *“Is it lawful to divorce one’s wife for any cause?”* (Matthew 19:3, ESV), they were inviting Him into their intra-rabbinical dispute. Jesus refused to be baited when he said, *“Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, ‘Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh?’”* (Matthew 19:4–5, ESV). By appealing to Genesis 2, Jesus grounded marriage not in Mosaic concession but in creational covenant. *“What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate”* (Matthew 19:6, ESV).

The disciples’ response reveals the cultural shock: *“If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry”* (Matthew 19:10, ESV). Jesus had made divorce so difficult that His own followers considered celibacy preferable but notice what He protected: the woman. In a world where men discarded wives with legal ease, Jesus demanded covenant fidelity. He was not policing female behavior; He was restraining male abandonment. The “hardness of heart” that Moses accommodated (Matthew 19:8) was male hardness of heart—the willingness to treat women as disposable property rather than covenant partners. Jesus’ restriction on divorce was, in its first-century context, a restriction on male power for female protection.

This framework harmonizes perfectly with the prophetic tradition. Malachi condemned Israelite men who “deal treacherously” with the wives of their youth, covering the altar of the Lord with tears because the Lord no longer accepted their offerings (Malachi 2:13–16, ESV). The prophets consistently tied covenant unfaithfulness in marriage to covenant unfaithfulness to God, and they consistently defended the vulnerable—the widow, the orphan, the foreigner, the divorced woman left destitute. Jesus stands in this prophetic lineage. His concern for divorce was concrete justice for women whom the legal system left defenseless, and as God incarnate, He knew exactly what He was doing.

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### The Discipleship of Mary: Sitting at the Feet of the Rabbi

In Luke 10:38–42, Jesus visited the home of Martha and Mary in Bethany. Martha, “distracted with much serving” (Luke 10:40), complained to Jesus that her sister was not helping with the domestic duties. “*Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me*” (Luke 10:40). Jesus’ reply has echoed across two millennia: “*Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her*” (Luke 10:41–42).

The phrase “sat at the Lord’s feet” (Luke 10:39, *parakathisasa pros tous podas*) has profound meaning beyond what our English language can capture. “*Sitting at the feet*” of a teacher was the technical phrase for formal rabbinic discipleship. Paul uses the identical construction in Acts 22:3 when he describes his own training: “*I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of Gamaliel*” (Acts 22:3, ESV). To sit at a rabbi’s feet was to enroll as his student, to memorize his teachings, to absorb his interpretation of the Torah, and to prepare for future rabbinic authority. In the first century, this privilege was reserved for male disciples. No rabbi would permit a woman to occupy this position; the very suggestion would have been scandalous. Yet Jesus not only permitted it; He defended it against familial pressure. When Martha attempted to enforce gendered domestic roles, Jesus refused. “*Mary has chosen the good portion*”—the word “*chosen*” (*exelexato*) implies deliberate, decisive action as Mary was actively pursuing rabbinic education. Jesus declared that her choice would “*not be taken away from her*” (*ouk aphairethēsetai*). The passive voice suggests divine protection: no human authority—familial, cultural, or religious—could strip her of what she had received.

The implications are staggering. If Mary was sitting at Jesus’ feet as a rabbinic student, she was training to become a teacher herself. That was the purpose of discipleship, and He was treating her as a theological apprentice with the same status and expectation granted to the twelve disciples. The fact that Mary is later found at the tomb in John 20:11–18, entrusted with the first resurrection appearance and commissioned as the apostle to the apostles, confirms that her discipleship was not decorative. It was functional. It was authoritative, and it began at the feet of Jesus, in the home of Lazarus, while her sister served dinner.

### The Woman at the Well: Breaking Every Barrier

In John 4:1–42, Jesus’ encounter with the Samaritan woman shatters multiple layers of first-century exclusion. She was a Samaritan—ethnically despised by Jews, with whom they had no dealings (John 4:9). She was a woman—alone at the well in the heat of the day, suggesting social ostracism. She had been married five times and was currently living with a man not her husband (John 4:18)—a marital history that would have marked her as morally suspect in any community. By every metric of His culture, Jesus should have ignored her, or at best offered a terse greeting while maintaining ritual distance.

Instead, He initiated a theological conversation. He asked her for water, violating both gender and ethnic protocols. He revealed His identity as Messiah to her before revealing it to His own disciples in full. He discussed worship, theology, and the coming kingdom with a woman who, by Jewish standards, had no standing to discuss such matters. When the disciples returned, “*they marveled that he was talking with a woman*” (John 4:27)—the Greek *ethaumazon* expresses not mild surprise but stunned disbelief. Rabbis did not discuss the Torah with women in public. A Jewish man would not request water from a Samaritan. Jesus did both simultaneously. The result was revolutionary! The woman became the first evangelist in Samaria. “*Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman’s testimony*” (John 4:39). A woman with a scandalous past, from a despised ethnicity, in a region considered spiritually bankrupt, became the conduit for an entire town’s conversion. Jesus did not first require her to secure male sponsorship or submit to a waiting period of domestic probation. He spoke to her, revealed Himself to her, and sent her to preach. The kingdom had arrived, and its heralds would not be selected by human criteria.

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### The Women Who Followed: A Traveling Discipleship Community

Luke's Gospel provides a remarkable detail that the other evangelists include only partially. In Luke 8:1–3, we read:

*“Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's household manager, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.”*

This is unprecedented. Women were not permitted to travel with rabbinic circles. The presence of female followers would have exposed Jesus to charges of impropriety, compromised His reputation, and violated every norm of respectability. Yet Luke records that women not only followed; they funded the ministry. The phrase “provided for them out of their means” (*diēkonoun autois ek tōn hyparchontōn autais*) uses the same root as *diakonos*—the term Paul applies to Phoebe and Timothy as official ministry titles. These women were financial patrons and ministry partners, sustaining the itinerant mission through their own resources.

Joanna's presence is particularly striking. As the wife of Herod's household manager (*epitropos*), she occupied a position of significant social standing. Her conversion and subsequent support of Jesus' movement represented a direct transfer of elite resources from the Herodian court to the Galilean preacher. This was not merely religious devotion; it was political and economic reallocation, and Jesus accepted it. He built His movement with women at the center of its financial and logistical infrastructure.

In Luke 23:49, these same women stood at the cross when the male disciples had fled: *“And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance watching these things.”* In Luke 23:55–56, they prepared spices and ointments for His burial, and in Luke 24:1–10, they were the first witnesses to the empty tomb, the first recipients of the angelic announcement, and the first preachers of the resurrection to the disbelieving apostles. Jesus entrusted the foundational proclamation of Christianity to women in a culture where female testimony was legally inadmissible. The apostles initially dismissed their report as “an idle tale” (*lēros*, Luke 24:11)—the Greek term connotes nonsense, a fairy-tale delusion. Yet Jesus vindicated the women. Their testimony was the cornerstone of the faith.

### Paul's Revolutionary Singlehood: Identity Beyond Marriage

The apostle Paul extends Jesus' revolution into the practical structures of Greco-Roman society. In 1 Corinthians 7:8, he writes: *“To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single, as I am.”* He repeats the counsel in verse 26: *“I think that in view of the present distress it is good for a person to remain as he is.”* And in verse 32: *“I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. But the married man is anxious about the things of the world, how to please his wife.”*

We must be clear: this text is not primarily about women, but about singleness, devotion to Christ, and the freedom from worldly anxiety that undivided attention to the Lord affords. Paul addresses men and women equally. The counsel applies to both genders with identical force. Yet we cannot miss what Paul—who knew the Greco-Roman world as intimately as anyone—understood about the implications of his words for women.

In Roman law, women could not hold citizenship independently. Their social identity was derived from their father or husband. A woman without a male patron had no legal standing, no property rights, and no social protection. For Paul to tell women that remaining single was “good”—not merely tolerable, but positively advantageous—was to declare that their

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identity, value, and purpose were not contingent upon male attachment. They did not need a husband to be complete. They did not need a father to validate their existence. They needed Christ, and in Christ they possessed full standing before God.

Paul drives the point home in verse 34: *"The unmarried woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about the things of the world, how to please her husband."* The parallel structure is deliberate. The unmarried woman's spiritual anxiety is identical in kind and equal in value to that of the unmarried man. Her devotion to the Lord is not a consolation prize for lacking a husband. It is a primary vocation, worthy of full commitment and social respect.

Paul practiced what he preached. Again, in Romans 16, he greets Mary, Tryphaena, Tryphosa, and Persis—all women who *"worked very hard in the Lord"* (Rom. 16:6, 12). These women were identified by their labor, their ministry, and their standing in the gospel, not by their husbands' names or their marital status. Paul treated them as autonomous agents of the kingdom and not as dependents requiring male mediation. The "present distress" (1 Cor. 7:26) of which Paul wrote may have included persecution, but it also included the social precarity of single women in a patriarchal empire. Paul was not naive about the practical difficulties. He was declaring that the difficulties were surmountable because the kingdom offered a new social order where women's dignity was grounded in Christ.

### The Old Testament Witness: Women at the Center of Worship

The New Testament revolution did not emerge from a vacuum. It was the flowering of seeds planted in the Old Testament, where God consistently used women in leadership roles that should not be ignored.

Consider, for instance, what we find at the tabernacle itself. In Exodus 38:8, we read: *"He made the basin of bronze and its stand of bronze, from the mirrors of the ministering women who ministered at the entrance to the tent of meeting."* The Hebrew term *tsābā'* (אָצַב), translated "ministered," is the same word used for Levitical service throughout the Pentateuch. These women were not just cleaning the courtyard or providing hospitality. They were "ministering" (*tsōbōt*, the participial form) at the entrance to the tabernacle—the very threshold of God's presence. Their mirrors, bronze polished to reflective brilliance, were consecrated for the basin used in priestly purification. These women funded, fashioned, and facilitated the worship apparatus of Israel.

In 1 Samuel 2:22, Eli's sons are condemned for sleeping with *"the women who were serving at the entrance to the tent of meeting"* (*ha-nāšīm ha-tsōbōt peṭaḥ 'ōhel mō'ēd*). The context is one of corruption—Eli's sons exploited their position to sexually abuse these ministering women—but the very existence of the accusation confirms that women held recognized, official positions at the sanctuary. They were part of the structured worship community, with duties significant enough that their abuse represented a desecration of holy office.

There is more here: the Hebrew term *tsābā'* carries military and liturgical connotations throughout the Old Testament. It is used for the "hosts" of heaven, the "army" of Israel, and the "service" of the Levites. When applied to women at the tabernacle, it places them within the same semantic field as the male priestly and Levitical orders. They were ministers of the sanctuary, participating in the formal worship structure of the covenant community.

### Miriam: Prophetess and Leader

Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron, occupies a unique position in Israel's founding narrative. In Exodus 15:20–21, after the crossing of the Red Sea, *"Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women went out after her with tambourines and dancing. And Miriam sang to them: 'Sing to the LORD, for he has triumphed gloriously; the horse and his rider he has thrown into the sea.'"* The title "prophetess" (*nḇî'â*) is functional. Miriam exercised the same

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prophetic office as Moses, though with a different scope. She spoke God's words to God's people, leading them in worship and interpreting their deliverance through inspired song.

In Numbers 12:1–15, Miriam and Aaron challenged Moses' leadership: *"They said, 'Has the LORD indeed spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?'"* (Num. 12:2). The Lord's response is telling. He summoned all three to the tent of meeting, and the pillar of cloud descended. *"And the LORD said to them, 'Now listen to what I say: If there is a prophet among you, I the LORD make myself known to him in a vision; I speak with him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses... With him I speak mouth to mouth, clearly, and not in riddles, and he beholds the form of the LORD'"* (Num. 12:6–8). God affirmed Moses' unique intimacy but did not deny Miriam's prophetic status. He affirmed it by including her in the confrontation and by punishing her—temporarily with leprosy—for the rebellion, then healing her in response to Aaron's intercession and Moses' prayer.

The incident demonstrates that Miriam possessed sufficient authority to challenge the nation's supreme leader. She was not a passive observer of Israel's governance. She was an active participant in its prophetic leadership, with standing to question, voice to dissent, and capacity to be disciplined for overreach. Her role was dangerous, consequential, and real. When Micah 6:4 later recalls Israel's deliverance—*"For I brought you up from the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of slavery, and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam"*—God lists her as one of the three foundational leaders of the nation. No male mediator was required for her authority. God sent her directly.

### Deborah: Judge, Prophet, and Military Commander

In Judges 4–5, Deborah stands as the most comprehensive female leader in the Old Testament. She is introduced as *"a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth... judging Israel at that time"* (Judg. 4:4). The Hebrew term *shopeṭā* (שׁוֹפֵטָא) is the feminine form of the standard title for Israel's deliverer-judges. Deborah exercised judicial authority—*"the people of Israel came up to her for judgment"* (Judg. 4:5)—in an era when *"there was no king in Israel"* and *"everyone did what was right in his own eyes"* (Judg. 17:6; 21:25). Her leadership was not provisional or exceptional. It was the normal functioning of God's governance in a lawless age.

Deborah's role exceeded mere adjudication. When Israel was oppressed by Jabin of Canaan and his commander Sisera, she summoned Barak and delivered a prophetic command: *"Has not the LORD, the God of Israel, commanded you, 'Go, gather your men at Mount Tabor...?' And I will draw out Sisera... to the river Kishon, and I will give him into your hand"* (Judg. 4:6–7). Barak's response is remarkable: *"If you will go with me, I will go, but if you will not go with me, I will not go"* (Judg. 4:8). The male military commander refused to proceed without the woman's prophetic presence. Deborah agreed, but added a condition: *"I will surely go with you. Nevertheless, the road on which you are going will not lead to your glory, for the LORD will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman"* (Judg. 4:9).

The narrative fulfills this prophecy with devastating irony. Sisera, the fearsome Canaanite general, is defeated by Israel's forces but escapes on foot. He flees to the tent of Jael, a Kenite woman, who drives a tent peg through his skull while he sleeps (Judg. 4:21). The victory song in Judges 5 celebrates both women: *"Most blessed of women be Jael"* (Judg. 5:24), and *"Until I, Deborah, arose, until I arose, a mother in Israel"* (Judg. 5:7). Deborah describes herself not as an exception but as a maternal figure whose leadership birthed national deliverance. The *"mother in Israel"* (*'ēm bə-yiśrā'ēl*) metaphor is a claim to foundational, nation-shaping leadership.

Deborah's story is particularly significant because it offers no apology for her gender. The text does not say she led because no man was available, or because she was a temporary emergency measure. It presents her leadership as straightforward, Spirit-empowered, and effective. The *"song of Deborah"* (Judg. 5) became part of Israel's canonical worship literature, sung in the sanctuary, memorized by generations, and preserved as Scripture (Block 212–56).

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### Huldah: The Prophet Who Authenticated Scripture

In 2 Kings 22:14–20 and 2 Chronicles 34:22–28, King Josiah sent his officials to Huldah, the prophetess, after the Book of the Law was discovered during temple renovations. Huldah’s husband, Shallum, is identified as “the keeper of the wardrobe,” but it is Huldah who receives the king’s delegation, speaks the word of the Lord, and delivers the divine verdict on Judah’s fate. She authenticated the discovered scroll as genuine Scripture and pronounced national judgment. The high priest Hilkiah, the scribe Shaphan, and the king’s servant Ahikam—all male religious and political officials—came to Huldah, not to her husband, not to a male prophet, but to the woman who “spoke the word of the LORD” (2 Kings 22:15).

This is extraordinary. The king of Judah, executing the most significant religious reform in Israel’s history, submitted his discovered Scripture to a woman’s prophetic verification. Huldah’s authority was not subordinate. It was decisive. Without her authentication, the reform might not have proceeded. She stood at the intersection of textual discovery and divine confirmation, functioning as the bridge between Israel’s written Torah and its lived obedience. No male intermediary was required. God spoke through Huldah directly, and the kingdom trembled.

When we read the Old and New Testaments together, a clear path emerges. God used women as worship leaders at the tabernacle (Exodus 38; 1 Samuel 2). He raised women as prophets who shaped national destiny (Miriam, Deborah, Huldah). He welcomed women as disciples at His feet (Mary of Bethany). He protected women from male abandonment (Jesus on divorce). He commissioned women as resurrection witnesses (Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna). He endorsed women’s singlehood as a valid, honorable vocation (Paul in 1 Corinthians 7). He recognized women as co-laborers with identical titles and authority as men (Priscilla, Phoebe, Junia). This is the Word of God, read with historical eyes and canonical breadth, confirmed by the first generations of Christian witness.

We do not advocate for women in ministry because we have capitulated to culture. We advocate for women in ministry because we have capitulated to Christ—who touched the unclean, defended the divorced, welcomed the Samaritan, honored the single, and sent the women to preach the resurrection to the men who had abandoned Him. The Jesus who did these things is the same Jesus who reigns over His church today. To silence the voices He commissioned is not to protect the gospel. It is to resist the gospel’s own logic, and to add to Scripture a restriction that the Lord never imposed.

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### An Appeal for Unity While Searching the Scriptures

We write this as an appeal for unity, but it should be said plainly what we are not saying. We are not suggesting that doctrine is unimportant in the household of faith. A high view of Scripture requires us to treasure what God has spoken, and a healthy respect for church history demands that we honor what has long been settled as orthodox. There are primary doctrines—those fundamental truths that characterize historic Christianity and undergird the gospel itself: the deity of Christ, the Trinity, salvation by grace through faith, the authority of Scripture, the resurrection, and the return of Christ. These are not up for negotiation and would, by nature of their critical importance, cause us to part company if necessary. They have been confessed by the church across centuries, defended by martyrs, and preserved in the great creeds.

We must also recognize that alongside these primary doctrines stand secondary and tertiary issues. These are matters that are genuinely arguable, where faithful, Spirit-filled, Bible-believing Christians have arrived at different conclusions while remaining equally committed to Christ and His Word. The question of women speaking in church and of pastoral ministry—which we have examined through 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Corinthians 14, among others—falls into this category. It is not a doctrine that defines the gospel; it is an interpretation of how the gospel community orders itself in worship and leadership. We have already observed that Scripture is explicitly silent on these specific points, and therefore inference must be made based on the best explanation with the evidence we have in the rest of Scripture. However, to equate a secondary issue with a primary

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doctrine is to risk a dangerous kind of doctrinal separatism: the demand that everyone believe exactly as we believe on every point, as though our conclusions are beyond revision and our exegesis is infallible. This posture reveals not spiritual strength, but intellectual pride. It assumes that we have exhausted the meaning of Scripture and that the Spirit has withheld insight from every believer who disagrees with us. Such an attitude is incompatible with the humility that Scripture itself commands. We are, after all, human beings. We see through a glass darkly (1 Corinthians 13:12). We are learners still, and the Lord has more to teach us than we have yet imagined or understood.

### The Biblical Mandate for Unity in Diversity

The New Testament commands unity with the urgency of Christ's own final prayer. In John 17:20–23, Jesus prays that all who believe in Him "may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you"—not so that we might agree on every detail of interpretation, but "so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21). This unity, purchased by His blood and founded in the very oneness of the Godhead, is the church's witness to a watching world. Paul echoes this mandate repeatedly: "*Live in harmony with one another*" (Rom. 12:16); "*Welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God*" (Rom. 15:7); and "*Be eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*" (Eph. 4:3). The apostle even frames our corporate witness around this oneness, declaring that "*There is one body and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all*" (Eph. 4:4–6). These are imperatives rooted in the identity of the new creation community. When we divide over debatable matters, we fracture the very testimony Christ died to establish.

Yet Scripture is equally realistic: unity does not require uniformity. Paul devotes significant space—Romans 14–15 and 1 Corinthians 8–10—to navigating disagreements over "disputable matters" where sincere believers reach different conclusions. He instructs the strong in faith to "accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters" (Rom. 14:1), warning that the one who eats everything must not "treat with contempt" the one who does not, and the one who abstains must not "judge" the one who partakes (Rom. 14:3). Why? Because "God has accepted them" (Rom. 14:3), and each servant stands or falls before their own Master (Rom. 14:4). Similarly, Philippians 2:2 calls us to be "like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind"—a harmony of heart and purpose that allows for intellectual diversity without relational rupture. This is precisely the posture our conversation on 1 Timothy 2 and 1 Corinthians 14 requires: a community that can walk together, worship together, and serve together even when conclusions diverge over non-primary issues. The new covenant creation was never meant to be a monoculture of identical interpretations, but a fellowship of mutual forbearance where love covers a multitude of disagreements and the mission of Christ remains undivided.

### Practical Steps Toward Preserving Unity

How, then, do we maintain this unity in practice? First, we must listen—actively, attentively, and with genuine humility. James instructs us, "*My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry*" (James 1:19). Too often we listen only to refute, waiting for our turn to speak rather than seeking to understand. However, the one who truly listens shows love, for love "does not dishonor others" and "is not self-seeking" (1 Cor. 13:5). Second, we must give grace to one another, remembering that "*It is to one's honor to avoid strife, but every fool is quick to quarrel*" (Prov. 20:3). The person who turns every conversation into a dispute may win the argument, but they will also almost certainly lose a brother or sister. Third, we must look for common ground and build bridges whenever possible, especially for the sake of the gospel. In Acts 17, Paul stood before the philosophers of Athens and connected with pagans by affirming what they already believed: that there was "an unknown God" among them (Acts 17:23). He even quoted pagan poets, "*In him we live and move and have our being*" and "*We are his offspring*" (Acts 17:28)—not because he endorsed every word they spoke, but because he wanted to reach people where they were. Paul would not have us put so much importance on proving our points that we lose our relationships. He modeled a better way: for the sake of discussion, love the person and encourage them to grow closer to the Lord, even while holding a different point of view on some matters.

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Fourth, and above all, we must unite around the mission Christ gave us and hold fast to our commission as His church. Before He ascended, Jesus declared, *"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you"* (Matt. 28:18–20). This is not a secondary suggestion; it is the primary purpose of the church. When we stand shoulder to shoulder to reach the lost, to baptize new believers, and to teach them to follow Christ, our disagreements over non-essential matters are put in proper perspective. The early church *"devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer,"* and *"the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved"* (Acts 2:42, 47). Their unity was not merely the absence of conflict; it was the presence of shared mission. Let us, then, make discipleship our chief aim. Let the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit be the banner under which we march and let the salvation of the nations be the passion that unites our hearts. For when the church is busy fulfilling her commission, she discovers that her unity is not fragile—it is forged in the fire of shared purpose and sealed by the Spirit who sends us out together.

### Judging Doctrines by Their Fruit

Finally, let us remember the standard Jesus Himself gave us for evaluating any teaching, position, or conviction: *"By their fruit you will recognize them"* (Matt. 7:20). When a particular interpretation of Scripture causes a person to become argumentative, legalistic, or divisive, it is wise to question the validity of their position—not because the person is necessarily wrong in their exegesis, but because their disposition does not reflect the Spirit of Christ. *"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control"* (Gal. 5:22–23). If we have come to a strong personal conviction on a doctrinal issue, our first question should *not* be, "Am I right?" but rather, "Is this conviction helping me become more like Jesus in my nature?" We can then judge whether that conviction is from the Lord by the fruit it produces in our lives. The Spirit who leads us into all truth is the same Spirit who produces the character of Christ in us. Let us, then, be a people who hold our convictions with conviction, but hold our brothers and sisters with love—treasuring the primary doctrines that unite us, extending grace over the secondary matters that divide us, and always, in all things, pursuing the unity for which our Savior prayed and died.

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### Conclusion: An Open Invitation

We began this letter with two hard texts—1 Timothy 2:11–12 and 1 Corinthians 14:34–35—and a shared hunger to obey God with precision and faithfulness. We have not abandoned that hunger. We have sought to honor it by reading these passages as the Bible itself demands: in their historical context, alongside the whole counsel of God, and in light of the trajectory of redemptive history that moves from Eden’s partnership through the prophets and the Gospels to the new creation in Christ.

What we have found is not a single proof text that settles the matter, but a vast, multi-textual witness. We have seen Paul celebrate women as “outstanding among the apostles,” “deacons,” “prophets,” “co-laborers,” and “patrons,” using for them the very same titles he used for men. We have seen the Old Testament raise women as worship leaders at the tabernacle, judges over Israel, and prophets who authenticated Scripture. We’re not to suppress one biblical teaching in order to protect another. The cure is to submit to all of them, reading each text in its context and harmonizing the whole using healthy interpretive rules.

We write this because we, too, fear the Lord. We, too, will give an account. We are convinced that faithfulness to Scripture requires reading all of Scripture—not isolating two verses from their literary, historical, and cultural context while setting aside the dozens of texts that tell a different story. It is this discipline that has guided balanced evangelical scholarship for generations.

If you would like to discuss these matters further, one of our pastors would be honored to meet with you over coffee—on us. We care deeply about every person in our community, and we would love to walk through the Scriptures together as fellow disciples seeking the mind of Christ.

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### Conservative Scholarly Resources/Works Cited

For readers who wish to pursue this study further with scholars who hold to the inerrancy of Scripture and conservative evangelical credentials, we recommend the following works. Each scholar listed below is associated with conservative institutions, denominations, or theological commitments, and their work is grounded in a high view of biblical authority.

Clinton E. Arnold, *Ephesians*. Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, vol. 10. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010.

*Arnold is professor of New Testament language and literature at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University, and former president of the Evangelical Theological Society (2013). He holds a PhD from the University of Aberdeen and has published extensively on New Testament backgrounds and spiritual warfare from a conservative evangelical perspective. His commentary on Ephesians is widely recognized for its careful interaction with primary sources and its defense of Pauline authorship.*

Richard Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002.

*Bauckham is former professor at the University of St. Andrews and University of Cambridge, and a fellow of the British Academy. He is widely recognized as one of the most conservative and rigorous historical Jesus scholars of his generation, affirming the historicity of the Gospels and the reliability of eyewitness testimony. His work on the named women in the Gospels provides meticulous historical research demonstrating their significance in the early Christian movement.*

S. M. Baugh, "A Foreign World: Ephesus in the First Century." In *Women in the Church: An Analysis and Application of 1 Timothy 2:9–15*, edited by Andreas J. Köstenberger and Thomas R. Schreiner, 13–33. 2nd ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2005.

*Baugh is emeritus professor of New Testament at Westminster Seminary California, where he taught for thirty-eight years, and is an ordained minister in the Orthodox Presbyterian Church. He earned his PhD from the University of California, Irvine, and is a confessionally Reformed scholar known for his expertise in first-century Greco-Roman backgrounds. His work is characterized by rigorous historical method and conservative theological commitments.*

Linda L. Belleville, "Women in Ministry." In *Two Views on Women in Ministry*, edited by James R. Beck. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.

*Belleville is professor of New Testament at Bethel University (St. Paul, Minnesota), an evangelical institution affiliated with the Baptist General Conference (now Converge). She presents the egalitarian case in this Counterpoints volume alongside complementarian scholars Thomas R. Schreiner and Craig L. Blomberg, engaging the debate from within conservative evangelical parameters.*

Daniel I. Block, *Judges, Ruth*. New American Commentary. Nashville: B&H, 1999.

*Block is professor emeritus of Old Testament at Wheaton College and Graduate School, one of the premier evangelical institutions in the United States. He is a conservative evangelical scholar with a high view of Scripture, known for his extensive commentaries on Deuteronomy, Ezekiel, and Judges. His work on Deborah and the women of Judges reads the text with careful attention to Hebrew grammar and historical context from within a confessional evangelical framework.*

Gordon D. Fee, *Discovering Biblical Equality: Complementarity Without Hierarchy*, edited by Ronald W. Pierce, Rebecca Merrill Groothuis, and Gordon D. Fee. Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2005.

*Fee was professor emeritus of New Testament at Regent College (Vancouver) and an ordained minister in the Assemblies of God, a conservative Pentecostal denomination. He was one of the most respected evangelical New Testament scholars of the late twentieth century, known for his magisterial commentaries on 1 Corinthians and Philippians in the NICNT series. He writes: "It seems a sad*

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*commentary on the church and on its understanding of the Holy Spirit that 'official' leadership and ministry is allowed to come from only one half of the community of faith. The New Testament evidence is that the Holy Spirit is gender inclusive, gifting both men and women."*

J. M. Hübner, "Revisiting the Clarity of Scripture in 1 Timothy 2:11–15." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 59, no. 1 (2016): 99–117.

*Hübner is a former contributor to Alpha and Omega Ministries (James White's apologetics organization) and holds advanced degrees in biblical studies. While his later work has moved in more critical directions, this particular article was published in JETS, the flagship journal of the Evangelical Theological Society, and engages conservative hermeneutical debates from within the evangelical academy.*

Craig S. Keener, *Paul, Women & Wives: Marriage and Women's Ministry in the Letters of Paul*. Peabody: Hendrickson, 1992. *Keener is F. M. and Ada Thompson Professor of Biblical Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary and former president of the Evangelical Theological Society (2020). He is one of the foremost New Testament scholars in the evangelical world, with over thirty books to his name. He writes: "Pentecostals and charismatics affirm that the minister's authority is inherent in the minister's calling and ministry of the Word, not the minister's person. In this case, gender should be irrelevant as a consideration for ministry—for us as it was for Paul."*

Guy MacLean Rogers, *The Sacred Identity of Ephesos: Foundation Myths of a Roman City*. London: Routledge, 1991. *Rogers is Kemper Professor of History and Classics at Wellesley College and a leading authority on ancient Ephesus. While Wellesley is not an evangelical institution, Rogers's work is purely historical and archaeological, providing the documentary and epigraphic evidence for the Artemis cult and first-century Ephesian society that conservative and liberal scholars alike must engage. His research is foundational for understanding the historical context of 1 Timothy.*

Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek, *Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documentary History*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005.

*Madigan is professor of the history of Christianity at Harvard Divinity School, and Osiek is professor of New Testament at Brite Divinity School (Texas Christian University). While both scholars work in mainstream academic institutions, their volume is a documentary history that presents primary sources without theological advocacy. It is widely cited by scholars across the theological spectrum for its careful collection and translation of patristic evidence regarding women's offices in the early church.*

Stanley E. Porter, "The Basis of Gender Equality in the Bible." In *Discovering Biblical Equality*, 3rd ed. Downers Grove: IVP, 2021.

*Porter is president and dean of McMaster Divinity College (Hamilton, Ontario), a Baptist institution affiliated with the Canadian Baptists of Ontario and Quebec. He is a leading New Testament scholar in the evangelical academy, known for his work on Greek linguistics and hermeneutics. He argues that "the basis of gender equality in the Bible is not necessarily found in only a single passage but in an entire complex of teaching that unfolds most clearly in the New Testament. There is a thematic formation regarding gender equality that runs from creation itself to the New Testament."*

Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006.

*Towner is an evangelical scholar and former dean of the Nida Institute for Biblical Scholarship at the American Bible Society. He earned his PhD from the University of Aberdeen and is widely recognized as one of the leading international authorities on the Pastoral Epistles. His NICNT commentary defends Pauline authorship against critical scholarship and provides what may be the most*

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*extensive exegetical treatment of these letters in English. While he takes an egalitarian position on women in ministry, he does so from within conservative evangelical parameters, affirming biblical authority and inerrancy.*

Leland Wilshire, *Insight into Two Biblical Passages: Anatomy of a Prohibition; 1 Timothy 2:12, the TLG Computer, and the Christian Church*. Lanham: University Press of America, 2010.

*Wilshire is a scholar who has taught at evangelical institutions and whose work on 1 Timothy 2:12 using the Thesaurus Linguae Graecae (TLG) database provided groundbreaking lexical analysis of the term *authentēō*. His research demonstrates that this rare word carried connotations of violent usurpation rather than legitimate authority, supporting the contextual interpretation of Paul's prohibition.*

Albert Wolters, "Αὐθεντής and Its Cognates in Biblical Greek." *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 52, no. 4, 2009.

*Wolters is professor emeritus of religion at Redeemer University College (Hamilton, Ontario), a Reformed Christian institution. He is a respected scholar in the evangelical community, known for his work on biblical Greek and his contributions to the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society. His lexical study of *authentēs* provides crucial evidence for understanding the rare term in 1 Timothy 2:12.*

N.T. Wright, "Women's Service in the Church: The Biblical Basis," presented at the International Symposium on Men, Women and the Church.

*Wright is former Bishop of Durham in the Church of England and one of the world's foremost New Testament scholars. While Anglicanism spans a range of theological positions, Wright is widely recognized as an evangelical within that tradition, affirming the bodily resurrection of Christ, the authority of Scripture, and the historicity of the Gospels. He argues that "we have seriously misread the New Testament passages" on women in leadership and demonstrates that Paul's main point in 1 Timothy 2 is that "women should be allowed, along with the men, to study and learn so that they can become teachers and leaders.*