

**WHAT'S A WOMAN TO DO:
A Study of Female Leadership Roles In The Local Church
by Andy and Sharon Meade**

Beliefs and practices implemented in church are to be based on the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16), not on the prevailing winds of present day culture, nor on the ingrained habits of established tradition. In the church we need to accept the Bible in its entirety as God's authoritative word on what we do and don't do in every area of life. And this imperative should of course be our guide as well in the matter of ordination and placement of women in the senior pastor position of the local church. It is exclusively on the authority of biblical text that the Vineyard Community Church, Virginia Beach, Virginia bases its position in favor of the ordination and placement of women in the senior pastor position.

In past centuries women who felt called to serve God through the local church might enter convents or become nuns to spend their lives in private prayer and devotion, but they could not be ordained. It wasn't until the 1700s, when evangelical revivals under John Wesley and George Whitefield began to sweep across England and America that this *traditional* view of women in ministry began to give way. With the spread of evangelical revival to America, the role of women in ministry blossomed. Under revivalist Charles Finney, women were given greatly increased opportunities to pray and speak in public worship services. And as president of Oberlin College, Finney admitted women as students—making Oberlin the first co-educational college in America. A former student of Finney, Antoinette Brown, was the first woman to be ordained in America.



Antoinette Brown

But history's replete with examples showing that in great spiritual awakenings, such as those of Wesley and Finney, women are accepted in the early stages, rising to positions of leadership in the local church, but later, as tradition reasserts itself and the revivalist movement becomes institutionalized, they are again bypassed in favor of male leadership. As will be shown later in this paper, Paul himself names women who served Christ in the earliest days of the Christian Church as important co-workers, leaders, and teachers and "contended at my side in the cause of the gospel."

In a brief look at the doctrinal position of Vineyard Community Church, Virginia Beach, Virginia, regarding our understanding of the biblical role of women and how they may serve in the senior pastor position of the local church, this positional paper will consider three relevant subject areas: Creation and Women, the Home and Women, and the Church and Women.

I. CREATION AND WOMEN. Genesis 1-3

It's important to review some basic facts about creation. In particular, six key concepts stand out regarding the creation account.

1. While both male and female were created in God's image, man was created first. (Genesis 2:7,15). The Bible says, "**So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he**

created him; male and female he created them.” Genesis 1:27 (NIV) Although man was created first, both male and female were created in God’s image.

2. Woman was created to be a companion to man and to be his “help meet” in responsibilities assigned by God. Genesis 2:18,20 (KJV) **“And the LORD God said, *It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him...but for Adam there was not found an help meet for him.*”**

Woman was created as not just a *helper*, but a “help meet” ‘ezer kenegdô, (עֵזֶר כְּנֶגְדּוֹ), which means a *suitable helper*. The words “helper” and “suitable” (thus translated in the KJV “help meet”) from the context implies that her mission is the same mission given to the man, a “co-missioning,” as it were, to “be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:28) and “for worship and obedience” of God (Genesis 2:15). The King James “help meet” adequately reflects the Hebrew meaning: someone who is compatible with him emotionally, intellectually and spiritually. This distinctive role was assigned to woman before the fall, before sin, and before human tradition or etymological distortion.

3. God created woman from the man (Genesis 2:21-23). The name “woman,” Hebrew, *isha* (אִשָּׁה), means “out of man.” God created woman in the way He did so that both would recognize their dependence upon one other, a point Paul makes in 1 Corinthians 11:11-12.

4. God’s plan for men and women is for them to be married (Genesis 2:24). Family and babies were later innovations, in their proper order.

5. Both man and woman are responsible for the repercussions of sin, and through the preaching of the gospel, the redemption from sin (Genesis 3:1-13). The woman sinned first; she was deceived. But the man sinned willfully. This point causes significant consternation for many. While the text is clear that the woman sinned first because she was deceived and that the man later sinned willfully, the conclusions drawn by theologians today are often quite different.

The original intent of the New Testament authors was that we will all stand accountable before God for the sin we have committed here on earth. BOTH genders, man and woman, are responsible for the sin that entered the world and, accordingly, both are responsible in its redemption (Romans 10:14-15). In 1 Corinthians 15:22 (NIV) it says, **“For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.”** This appears at first glance to only refer to the man by mentioning Adam’s name alone, yet in context and fully grasping Paul’s point, both genders can be inferred. Paul uses a Hebrew poetic style (acrostic) to emphasize this point in 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 when he says **“For since death came through a man (*anthropo*, ἀνθρώπου, a word meaning people or humankind¹), the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man [*anthropo*, (ἀνθρώπου, a man who represents all the human race)]. **For as in Adam** [transliterated from the Hebrew word *Adam* (אָדָם), whose sin cursed the entire human race] **all die, so in Christ** [Christo (Χριστώ), whose blood brought redemption to the whole human race] **all will be made alive.”****

¹ Bauer, Arndt, & Gingrich, (Rev. 1979) *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, London: University of Chicago Press, Ltd, p.68.

The reference to Adam here, while obviously paralleling the first man to Jesus (1 Corinthians 15:45-47), has an obvious broader context to include both the first male and the first female. In fact “Adam” sometimes is used to refer to both the man and woman. Adam sometimes refers not to the first man, but to both the man and the woman before sin entered the world as in Genesis 5:2 when **“Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.”** (King James)

The double usage of “Adam” explains an innocent, unselfconsciousness and single identity for the original perfect pair. The man RENAMED his wife AFTER the Fall and after the curse. This intrusion of self (among other things) was the result of a darkened human mind, soul and motives. The phrase **“in Adam”** in 1 Corinthians 15:22 suggests that both the man and the woman brought the consequences of sin into the world. Peterson says that Paul reiterates that idea in 1 Timothy 2:14 (The Message) when he says **“Adam was made first, then Eve; woman was deceived first-our pioneer in sin!-with Adam right on her heels.”** In other words, sin came into the world through “Adam,” representing all people, and God saved the world by one man.

A *God versus humanity* theme is made many times in Scripture (i.e. 1 Timothy 2:5). Yet the New International Version renders this text unnecessarily condemnatory of woman, so as to cause the casual reader to draw an erroneous conclusion. This is because while God’s Word is infallible, human translators are not afforded such a luxury. Preconceptions and even prejudices can influence a Bible translator. While Scripture is God’s Word, it must be kept in mind that fleeting times and cultures often form both backdrop and occasion for the writing.

A poignant example of such a situation was Paul’s letter to Timothy regarding the church at Ephesus. In 1 Timothy 2:11-15 (NIV), Paul says this regarding about instructions for worship: **“A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or have authority over a man; She must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived. It was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety.”** Contrast this with many other passages that indicate that Paul allowed women to teach.

Priscilla (and her husband) discipled a man named Apollos (Acts 18:26). The reason Paul gives in verses 13 and 14 for his prohibition in verse 12 seems to argue for a woman’s silence from the order of her later creation and her being deceived (Romans 5:12-19). If this is the case, the word *for* (γάρ) in verse 13 would likely be taken as the reason for silence, meaning that the very manner in which the woman was “wired from the beginning” predisposed her for all time to be easily deceived.

But instead of a continuation of thought, “for” expresses nothing more than a connection to a new thought, as in Romans 3:23 (ASV), “for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.” – “for” means nothing more than “furthermore.” So Paul then would mean that women are to receive instruction from men not because Adam was formed first, but Adam’s priority would simply be due to his *educational advantage*, which in fact can be seen in the creation account.

Eve apparently had been easily entrapped (1 Tim. 2:14) because she was unlearned. The man had “walked” and talked with God in the Garden during that sixth day, which suggests that he had the educational and spiritual advantage of being “formed first” (1 Tim 2:13). The verb “formed” used here is *plasso* (ἐπλάσθη), meaning “to form, mold, shape,” which would suggest spiritual education and should not be translated “created first” which would have been the Greek word *ktizo*, (κτίσο) as only a few versions translate it.

Thus, Paul is emphasizing the “order of *education*” rather than the “order of creation.” This gentle admonition, *she must be silent* (εἶναι ἐν ἡσυχία), says Dr. Walter Kaiser, Professor of Old Testament and President of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, is an imperative verb that can be translated “a woman must be *taught*.”²

This statement of what Paul himself does *not* allow is godly advice for us *all*. Until a woman has been taught she should not publicly proclaim doctrine or actively function in a place of authority in the church. Neither should any *man*! Indeed, Paul’s new liberating instruction to “*Let a woman learn...*” (1 Timothy 2:11) stands in direct opposition to what was expected of women, both Jewish and Roman, since, in those cultures, women generally were not encouraged to be educated.

Dr. Don Williams suggests this translation: “I am not presently permitting a woman to teach or to have authority over men...” until they are taught.³ This instruction was necessary to the early church, for although women went uninstructed in the synagogue, they were commonly taught doctrine in the church (e.g. Acts 2:42). Gifted for ministry by the Spirit and incorporated into the body of Christ, some of these women quickly achieved positions of leadership (e.g. Romans 16).

Paul encourages women to teach in the church but with the right heart attitude: a quiet and submissive spirit. 1 Timothy 2:11 “*A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.*” Here the Greek word for quietness is *hesuchia* (ἡσυχία) which means “quiet spirit,” “a tranquil life,” or “causing no disturbance to others.” This instruction for maintaining a quiet spirit is the same word used in 2 Thessalonians 3:12 (KJV), “**...that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread**”.

Men are to partake in fellowship, not that men should refrain from ever speaking while they eat or work on the job, just as women are to initiate this same attitude in church. True godly submission is an attitude, a way of life, that all Christians are expected to exude, and not for women only (Ephesian 5:21). For that reason, this commandment is given to both men and women, just in different contexts.

6. When the man and the woman sinned, it brought curses on the world (Genesis 3:14-19). One of the most tragic consequences of the fall was that there was a breakdown in relationships between husbands and wives. In Genesis 3:16 it says, “**And her husband will rule over her**” as an injunction of the curse. In other words, from now on, God said men

² Kaiser, Walter (1980). *Paul, Women and the Church*. The World Wide Challenge.

³ Williams, Don. (1977). *The Apostle Paul and Women in the Church*. Glendale, CA: G/L Publications, p.112.

will try to dominate women to satisfy carnal desires that apparently were not there originally and thus tend to distort ideal marital relationships.

Today one doesn't have to look too far to discover selfishness, pride and one-upmanship in marital relationships that are not surrendered to the Lordship of Christ. From the result of sin, husbands try to dominate their wives and wives try to dominate their husbands. Neither is God's ideal. Because of sin, men often view women as inferior and for their own use, not as companions or as helpers as God intended. Therefore throughout history things like polygamy, slavery and subjugation of women were practiced.

By the time Jesus entered the scene, women were being treated very poorly. They were bought and sold, traded and discarded. The position of women had been reduced to insignificance. But that was not how God intended it, nor is it God's fault. He never condoned this behavior but instead offered a radically different paradigm. Galatians 3:26-28 (Good News):

“It is through faith that all of you are God’s sons in union with Jesus Christ. You were baptized into union with Christ and so have taken upon yourselves the qualities of Christ Himself. So there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles, between slaves and free men, between men and women. You are all one in union with Christ Jesus.”

In this declaration, just as the racial and social barriers have been broken down, so also are the sexual barriers. Male dominance, egotism, patriarchal power and preferential priority is at an end.

It wasn't Billy Jean King who put an end to the war of the sexes, it was Jesus Christ. And the redemption Christ won for His church ends sexual segregation and discrimination as we surrender to Christ's lordship.

II. WOMEN'S ROLES IN FAMILY AND CHURCH

As we saw in creation (Genesis 2), marriage is God's idea. In fact, God created two institutions: The family and the church. He intends for both of them to be organized and to function the way He designed them. The Bible says God is not the author of confusion. He has laid out very clear parameters in both the Old and New Testaments for the church and the family (1 Corinthians 14:33).

There are many passages that refer to the institution of the family but let's look at the passage that's perhaps most familiar: Ephesians 5:22-33. Paul says this regarding marriage in verse 32 of Ephesians 5: **“This is a profound mystery, but I am talking about Christ and the church.”** (NIV) Paul is saying in this passage that marriage is to be a spiritual object lesson. The husband's relationship to the wife is to be the same as Christ's relationship to the church, which is made up of three key elements:

First, Christ is the head of the church. Ephesians 5:23 (NIV) **“...Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.”** The church is not a democracy. We don't vote on God's will. We don't see Moses taking a vote with the Israelites saying, “Should we go to the Promised Land or should we go back to Egypt?” We're all supposed to find out what God wants us to do.

Second, Christ leads the church because He loves her, tenderly cares for her and gives of Himself to meet her needs. Ephesians 5:25-27 (NIV) **“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.”**

Christ demonstrates His total love and unselfishness for the church by dying for her.

Ephesians 5:25 (NIV) says **“...Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.”** He made the ultimate sacrifice in giving His life for the bride of Christ.

Third, the church is to submit to Christ’s loving leadership. Ephesians 5:24 (NIV) **“Now as the church submits to Christ so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything...”**

Paul gives us these three truths about the church and then he parallels it to marriage. First, notice in marriage that the husband is the spiritual leader of the wife. Ephesians 5:23 **“For just as the husband is the head of the wife, Christ is the head of the husband.”** Not “the head” because of culture or because husbands are smarter (obviously that’s not true). Not because they’re superior and not because wives are inferior, but because God set it up that way to illustrate a spiritual truth about the church. It’s a wonderful truth.

Second, the husband leads his wife by loving her and serving her. In the same way, biblical leadership is servanthood (Matthew 20:25-26). All leadership as Jesus taught is servant leadership. Ephesians 5:28-29 **“In the same way husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no one ever hated his own body but he feeds and cares for it just as Christ does the church.”**

Husbands should demonstrate love for their wives in a manner no less than their love for themselves. Notice Ephesians 5:25 (New KJV) **“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her.”** The operative word is the verb “gave.” Wives are to submit to the giving of their husbands. Husbands are to be the head of their wives as they give themselves to and for their wives, which is undoubtably the pattern Peter had when he gave the same directive (1 Peter 3:5-6). In this lead role there is no tyranny, no male domination. Christ’s lordship over wives will never allow them to be subject to the sin or selfishness or the arbitrary will of their husbands.

There is a clear interlock of both the giving and submission. Husbands are to lead in their loving service to their wives, even when it’s inconvenient or painful, without limitation. And like Christ, the husband must be willing to die for his wife. Ephesians 5:25 (Living Bible) **“And you husbands, show the same kind of love to your wives as Christ showed to the Church when he died for her.”** The Bible says the husband must experience self-mortification on behalf of his wife’s needs, as Jesus demonstrated with his own life for the sake of His Bride, the church.

Third, the wife is to submit to her husband’s leadership and to respect him. Ephesians 5:22, 33: **“Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord...However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.”**

It is worth noting that Paul calls for mutual submission of husbands and wives when he says immediately preceding this passage in Ephesians 5:21 **“Submit to one another out of**

reverence for Christ.” He begins the entire discussion with this because marriage will only work properly as both partners submit themselves to each other in a God-honoring and God-fearing attitude. This of course does not nullify the illustration of headship in marriage of Christ and His church. On the contrary, it is just that an attitude of submission is considered a fundamental Christian characteristic that should be present in the lives of all believers. Peter also emphasizes this when he says, **“Yes, all of *you* be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for ‘God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble.’”** 1 Peter 5:5b (NKJV)

In fact, Paul here presupposes that for marriage to illustrate a complete picture of Christ and His church, the necessary ingredients include partners who are redeemed and are subject to Christ, the body of Christ, and each other as Christians.

After the family, the second institution established by God is the church. What is the role of women in the church? Can women minister to men? Is the ordination of women and their placement in the senior pastor position biblical?

The answer to these questions begins with defining the word “ministry” and “ordination.” Ministry is serving the needs of another in the power of the Holy Spirit for the glory of God. If you look up the word “minister” in the Bible it is the word “service.” To minister means to serve. The word “servant” is the same word for “minister,” the Greek *diakonia*, (Διακόνια). Can men be servants? Yes. Can women be servants? Yes. Can women have a ministry? Yes. Can men have a ministry? Yes.

The definition of “ordination” is the recognition of the evidence of the power of God in a person’s life for a special mission and destiny chosen by God. (Roman 13:1; Acts 17:31; Acts 13:48). We find such a calling on women throughout the early church.

First we have Priscilla (Acts 18:2,18,19,26; Romans 16:3; 1 Corinthians 16:19; 2 Timothy 4:19). Her husband was Aquila. Priscilla is mentioned six times in the New Testament. This is a famous husband and wife team. Four times her name is mentioned first, which suggests she may have had the gift of leadership and was the better teacher (Romans 12:7-8). Nevertheless, this husband and wife duo started churches all over Asia Minor. Paul honored this woman by calling her a “co-worker” in the ministry, a co-worker in the gospel.

Another example is Lydia in Acts 16. Lydia was a seller of purple, a cloth that had been died purple for royal gowns. She was wealthy, probably had a large house, and because of that she was able to host a church in her home.

In 1 Corinthians 1:11 Chloe had a church in her home. Obviously she was a small group leader, for they were shepherding a group of people.

In Philippians, Paul talks about a couple of women named Euodia and Syntyche. He says, **“I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.”** Philippians 4:2-3 (NIV) These are two woman who were literally “co-workers” with Paul in preaching the gospel (ver.3) who “labored side by side” which denotes a unity of sharing a common goal and task. Paul does not say that these

women served *under* Paul but *beside* Paul. And yet some time after Paul left, they got in a disagreement to such a degree Paul had to bring this word of admonishment. He is saying, “You’ve been helpful to me. You’ve been working with me in ministry. Don’t rip it all up by getting mad at each other.” Evidently Euodia and Syntyche were in such positions of leadership in the church in Philippi that they endanger its unity as opposed to simply spending their time doing behind-the-scenes domestic tasks for the congregation.

In Romans 16, Paul mentions six other women who had ministered with him. Paul’s attitude toward these women is one of honor. He talks about Phoebe, Priscilla, Mary (“**she worked hard for you**”), and two sisters named Tryphena and Tryphose (names which mean “dainty” and “delicate”). Then there was a lady named Persis. Persis, he said, worked very hard in the Lord, so obviously she too had a ministry.

Philip had four daughters with a gift of prophecy (Acts 21:8-9). It says they went out proclaiming truth everywhere, sharing the word. They were gifted speakers. They were faithful to their calling and the New Testament instruction: “**For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets.**” 1 Corinthians 14:31-32 (NIV)

From these examples we can see that there were woman prophets, elders and pastors in the New Testament church. But senior pastor of a local church? In a close and incisive reading of both didactic discourse as well as women singled out for special recognition, we can see there is freedom in Christ for such a calling.

Paul lays down a theological framework for spiritual authority and headship in 1 Corinthians 11:3-16 when he says, “**Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head and every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, it is just as though her head were shaved. If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a disgrace to have her hair cut off or shaved off, she should cover her head. A man ought not to cover his head since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man did not come from woman but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. For this reason, and because of the angels the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head. In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man nor is man independent of woman. For as the woman came from man so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God. Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair it is a disgrace to him but if a woman has long hair it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. If anyone who wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice – nor do the churches of God.**”

Paul appears to be talking about marriage, freedom in Christ and attitudes and behaviors during the worship service (1 Corinthians 7-10). Verse 3 is a reference to marriage, as he’s not saying men are the head of women, but that husbands are head of wives in the family. Obviously all men are not the head of all women.

Paul then in verses 4-6 discusses how a spiritual covering is to be applied in public worship services. Paul applies this regulation in a wide context to the entire local church body, and also appeals to “nature” (v.14). The contextual backdrop for Paul’s instruction was in Corinth, a large pagan city of the early Mediterranean world known for its rampant immorality. One of the city mores was that decent women either wore long hair or a shawl over their head and the only women who wore short hair were prostitutes. To women short hair in the city of Corinth was to make the statement, “I’m immoral. I’m available for illicit relationships.” Paul urged the church to be different from the immoral culture around them.

In 1 Corinthians 11:7,10 he says a woman’s hair is her glory.⁴ Paul says, **“A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man...For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head.”** Here the woman is “the glory (not the ‘image’) of man,” evidently suggesting that when men and women are rightly related in Christ, they both exude a divine or spiritual “glory.” God says that women have a “sign of authority” (ἐξουσίαν), an authority even the angels cannot attain. The word “head” used in verse 10, *kephalē* (κεφαλήν), which could be translated “source,” carries the meaning of power that flows from the unity of God with man and woman. Throughout the epistle of 1 Corinthians, each time Paul uses the word translated “authority” or “power” he uses the Greek word *exousia*, reflecting back to the creation account that the woman is a co-ruler with man over the created order. Paul summarizes this in 1 Corinthians 11:11-12: **“In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also is man born of woman. But everything comes from God.”** Here Paul is saying that there would be no woman if it were not for a man and there would be no man if it weren’t for a woman. And neither one would be here if it weren’t for God. We are dependent upon each other. Rather than being adversarial we need to be a team, particularly believing men and believing women, as we work for the same Christ.

Paul ends this topic of men and women speaking publicly during the worship service in 1 Corinthians 14:32-34 (KJV): **“The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints, women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says.”** How could Paul say they’re not allowed to speak when he earlier said when you pray and prophesy publicly make sure you have a covering over your head? Does that sound like a contradiction? He’s talking to the same group of people.

In 1 Corinthians 14:35-36 he says, **“If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home: For it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you [referring to men since this pronoun is in the masculine form (ὑμῶν)] the only people it has reached?”** Really Paul is asking a rhetorical question, with the obvious response being “No.” Since God’s word and grace originated with Him and extended to both men and women, both men and women are responsible for its proclamation.

⁴ Aland, Kurt; Metzger, Bruce, ed. (Rev. 1983). *The Greek New Testament*. (Germany: United Bible Societies. p.602.

Paul's purpose was to establish a fitting (vv. 34-35) and orderly (vv. 27-31) way of worship. The method of worship was chaotic and problematic in the Corinthian church, so he corrected the whole group by saying no woman could speak in this church in the worship service. And yet Paul did not mean absolute silence, which is the Greek word *sige* (σιγή), which would be commonly translated "silence" or "no noise," as in the text of 1 Timothy 2:11-12 we just looked at.

In the Jewish synagogue and possibly in the early church, historians posit that it was the custom for all the men to sit on one side and all the women to sit on the other, or in a balcony.

The only way a wife could speak to her husband in the service would be to shout across the room. Paul demanded that such dialogue wait until the couple got home.

Paul encouraged women to publicly pray and prophesy (prophecy is a public manifestation as seen in 1 Corinthians 14:3-4), and at the same time commanded them to be silent. This is best understood if he intends for their silence to be regarding questions they were to reserve for their husbands at home.

Peter said in Acts 2:17-18 that Pentecost was the beginning of the last days in which God would pour out His spirit on both men and women as predicted by Joel in the Old Testament. Joel 2:28-29 **"And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days."** The psalmist similarly predicted, **"The Lord gives the command: the women who proclaim the good tidings are a great host."** Psalm 68:11 (New American Standard Bible).⁵ There is clear fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and New Testament instruction of women's spiritual authority and roles as teaching pastors.

In a list of qualifications for deacon in 1 Timothy 3:10-11, some translations say what a deacon should have as his qualifications and then say, **"and likewise the wives..."** It sounds like the wives of deacons should have these qualifications. But the word there is not the word for "wife." It's a word for "women," *gunaikes* (γυναῖκας). So **"In the same way, women..."**, as is translated for 1 Timothy 3:11 in the New Century Version, may more closely reflect the intent of the writer.

There were women leaders in the church, such as Phoebe, Nympha and Junia. And as with the role of deacon where there are examples and qualifications, the qualifications for elders apply equally for women elders. The term referring to "man" is actually neuter in 1 Timothy 3:1. The Greek word for "woman" in chapter two, verse twelve is *gune* (γυνή) which refers to a woman who is usurping authority and is contentious. However, the Greek word translated by some as "man" in 1 Timothy 3:1 is *tis* (τις), a neuter pronoun which means "some or any person." Thus, there is emphasis on both sexes in this text without gender bias, Paul's intention.

⁵ While the NIV does not translate this women, the Hebrew word *company* (צבא) is feminine in gender and is translated as such by many other translators (i.e. New Living Translation, Good News Bible, Moffatt Translation, Contemporary English Version).

1 Timothy 3:1,2a (NIV) reads, **“Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.”** Also, Paul makes the qualifications for that position that her attainment of authority must not be arrogated, seditious or usurped (1 Timothy 2:11-12) and an overseer must be **“above reproach, the husband of but one wife... .”** (1 Timothy 3:2) Paul obviously is not requiring a person to be married since he himself was an unmarried overseer (1 Corinthians 7:8). It would appear that he is simply condemning polygamy as a practice among Christian men. This prohibition would obviously apply to women as well, although there are few examples in history of a woman having harems of men. At times in various New Testament instruction, one gender is singled out, though the instruction is not intended to be exclusionary (e.g. Colossians 3:19).

That the writer had in mind both men and women as potential candidates to hold the position of overseer or the office of an elder is further supported by examples of women, albeit few, doing exactly that.

Nympha seemed to have pastored a church in her home in the city of Laodicea. By excluding any reference to another leader, Paul most assuredly intends to honor her with responsibility. Colossians 4:15 (New Century) **“Greet the brothers in Laodicea. And greet Nympha and the church that meets in her house.”**

Phoebe also had the gift of leadership and was recognized as such in her role in the local church. Romans 16:1 (NRSV) states: **“I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deacon of the church at Cenchreae.”** Here she holds an official function as “deaconess” or “minister,” *diakonos* (Διακόνισσα) as she was a servant or minister at the church of Cenchrea. Notably, Paul recognizes her function not as a servant of the Lord but instead as “a servant of the church,” suggesting that she was holding some kind of official position there in the church as a deacon.

When Romans 16:1 and Romans 12:8 are compared, it’s obvious that Phoebe had the gift of administration. Paul says, **“She was a help to me.”** This is the same root word *prostatis* (προϊστάτις) in Greek, which is the word for “leadership,” “*pro*” meaning “first” and “*statis*” meaning “status, preeminence or oversight.” In other words, she was a leader in the church with some level of regional influence. (Literally Romans 16:2 would read “...for she has been a leader of many and of myself as well”)! I like the way the Contemporary English Version translates the Romans 16:2 text: **“Help her [Phoebe] in any way you can. After all, she has proved to be a respected leader for many others, including me.”** Phoebe was a proven and respected leader. She had a ministry recognized for its fruitfulness as we see in Paul’s statement “she has been a helper of many.” This is important as a clear sign of God’s call and blessing on her life.

Junia, mentioned in Romans 16:7, is a feminine name, strongly suggesting she was a female apostle. Romans 16:7 (New Century) **“Greetings to Andronicus and Junia, my relatives, who were in prison with me. They are very important apostles. They were believers in Christ before I was.”** While it is suggested that some men of that day had this name (like some females today being called Joe or Kevin) there are yet to be found any biblical or non-

biblical manuscripts to support this.⁶ Some theologians insist upon Junia being male, a position needed to clear up seemingly potential incongruencies, although, no commentator prior to the 13th century even questioned that this apostle was a woman.⁷ And yet here Junia is referred to as an apostle, a church planter (very likely in the city of Rome) and no doubt a senior pastor operating in the teaching and preaching ministry (Ephesians 4:11; 1 Corinthians 12:29; Romans 15:20-21; 1 Corinthians 9:2). While Junia was one of the Twelve, Junia's conversion predates Paul's, making Junia among the first believers after the resurrection of Christ and evidently sent out later as Paul and Barnabas were (Acts 14:4).

It may be well to defer on the subject of Junia to an early church father, Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople (d. 407), who said of Junia,

“And indeed to be Apostles at all is a great thing. But to be even amongst these of note, just consider what a great encomium this is! But they were of note owing to their works, to their achievements. Oh! How great is the devotion of this woman, that she should be even counted worthy of the appellation of apostle!”⁸

In conclusion, God intends that ultimate responsibility be given to male leadership within the home because it illustrates the relationship of Christ and the Church. However, it is our belief that within the church—supported by the account of creation in Genesis and the applications drawn throughout the biblical teachings along with numerous New Testament examples—women can minister without limitation, including the ordination and placement of women in the senior pastor position in the local church. It is our belief that, as Euodia and Syntyche did for Paul himself, they can “contend at my side in the cause of the gospel.”

⁶ Bruce, F.F., (1985). *Romans*. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. p. 258.

Brooten, B. (1977). *Junia. . . Outstanding among the Apostles*. A Catholic Commentary on the Vatican Declaration. New York: Paulist Press. p. 142.

⁷ Brooten, B. (1977). *Junia. . . Outstanding among the Apostles*. A Catholic Commentary on the Vatican Declaration. New York: Paulist Press. p. 141.

⁸ Chrysostom, John. (1956). *Homily on Romans 16*, in Philip Schaff, ed, A Select Library of the Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church, vol. II. Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co. p. 555.

Andy and Sharon Meade are both ordained and have been in the ministry for 18 years. For the past seven years they have co-pastored Vineyard Community Church - Virginia Beach, which they planted in January 1994. With a worship attendance of 800 and with nearly 300 first time decisions for Christ each year, Vineyard Community Church is among the top 10 largest churches in Virginia Beach and one of the Association of Vineyard Churches most evangelistic churches. It also received the recognition in 2001 as one of the nation's best protestant churches in a study sponsored by the Lilly Endowment.

Before starting Vineyard Community Church, Andy and Sharon served as assistant pastors under Todd Hunter for three years at Vineyard Christian Fellowship - Virginia Beach. Andy received his Bachelor of Arts of Religious Studies from the University of Arizona in 1986. In 1992 he received a Master of Divinity and a Master of Education from Regent University, Virginia Beach, Virginia. Sharon received a Bachelor of Science degree from Old Dominion University in 1984 and received a Master of Education in 1987 from Regent University, Virginia Beach, Virginia while also serving as adjunct education professor at Regent University.