

Bethel Seminary

Integration Paper: Women in Ministry

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Introduction

A few weeks ago, an important first occurred in the world of sports. Danica Patrick became the first woman to win a professional, automotive endurance race previously reserved for men only. The following days became the latest opportunity for humanity to wrestle with a basic question of sexuality: are men and women different and/or should they be restricted in their activities in any way.

This question is of great importance relative to the church of Jesus Christ. In particular, there has been much disagreement over whether women can teach and/or hold positions of authority over men. Well-reasoned exegesis is found on all sides of this issue. Respect is therefore due to each one who honestly pursues an answer to the extent of women's role in ministry via God's Word.

Yet, when the evidence is considered, I believe that the biblical evidence supports male leadership in the church. Yet along with that, I further contend that there is also much evidence of a larger role for women in the church than has traditionally been accorded them in the past. Essentially, I will seek to show that the restrictions accorded to women are in terms of authoritative teaching and positions which ensure it versus all forms of teaching and authority.

I. Setting Up The Match: Key Views

There are generally two broad categories in regard to women in ministry: egalitarianism and complementarianism.

A. Egalitarianism

Egalitarians see women and men as being able to do anything in the church without restriction.¹ Within this view are various explanations for the apparent restrictions on women teaching and having authority that are found particularly in the writings of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 11,14 and 1 Timothy 2. For instance, N.T. Wright suggests that the church has misread the 1 Timothy 2:12 prohibition and that it actually says that women ought to be allowed to learn in silence so that they do not go astray like the women of Ephesus.² Others acknowledge there is a restraint on women teaching but see it as temporary based on a variety of cultural, grammatical and historical reasons.³ The end result for all egalitarians is that the teachings of Paul regarding women in ministry are no longer normative for today.⁴

B. Complementarianism

On the other hand, those who hold to the normative nature of Paul's teachings see the role of women as being complementary but not equal to that of men.⁵ As in egalitarianism, there is considerable difference in the practical out-workings of this arrangement. Some believe that only men are to teach and have authority in all aspects of church life.⁶ Others modify the position to exclude women from positions of highest teaching authority only. Still others allow a woman to hold any position as long as it is

¹ Robert L. Saucy and Judith K. TenElshof, "Women and Men in Ministry: A Complementary Perspective," (Chicago: Moody Press, 2001), 27.

² N.T. Wright, "Women's Service in the Church: The Biblical Basis," September 4, 2004, a conference paper for the Symposium, 'Men, Women and the Church'

³ Stanley J. Grenz and Denise Muir Kjesbo, "Women in the Church: A Biblical Theology of Women in Ministry," (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1995), 130-132. Among these reasons are that women were not well-educated, there was a serious heresy related to Eve worship in Ephesus, the use of the present indicative versus the imperative, etc....)

⁴ Saucy and TenElshof, 27.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Robert Culver, "A Traditional View: Let Your Women Keep Silence," in *Women in Ministry: Four Views*. ed. Bonnidell and Robert G. Clouse (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 42.

supervised by a male authority figure.⁷ Nevertheless, all complementarians agree that females should be in subordination to males and that the basis for this is the created order of God – a constant that makes this position normative for all time and all people.⁸

II. Men and Women: The Evidence

I will begin by considering the anthropological status of men and women and then move on to the most important consideration for followers of Christ – the biblical record.

A. Anthropology

First of all, human experience has shown salient differences between men and women. Generally, women view life in “personal, moral and aesthetic terms” while men view it in “terms of objects, ideas and theories.”⁹ Women are more relationship-oriented while men are more task-oriented; women are more supportive and nurturing while men are more adventurous and initiating; women are more emotive while men tend to be stoic.¹⁰ Grenz and Kjesbo relate extensive findings in anthropology and neuropsychology which support these kinds of generalizations.¹¹

Both biblical egalitarians and complementarians seem to agree on these creational differences.¹² Both state that the gender differences affirm the mutuality of the sexes. However, a study referenced by Saucy and TenElshof of historical leadership tendencies shows that men lead across cultures and time – lending credence to the idea that male

⁷ Saucy and TenElshof, 28.

⁸ David V. Clark and Robert V. Rakestraw ed., “Reading in Christian Ethics: Volume 2: Issues and Applications,” (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 296.

⁹ Saucy and TenElshof, 320.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Grenz and Kjesbo, 159.

¹² Radical feminists would likely differ; hence the specificity of ‘biblical’ egalitarians.

leadership is part of the very nature of the genders.¹³ This certainly fits with the evidence that males are more assertive and initiating in general.

B. Scripture: The Created Order

Having briefly considered human experience, it is vital to analyze what God's authoritative Word says. To begin with, the Bible begins addressing male and female ontology in its very first chapter. In Genesis 1:27, God creates 'man' in his image, 'male and female' he created them. Erickson explains the Hebrew parallelism that results in the highlighting of the 'male and female' phrase – both men and women, therefore, fully bear the image of God and are of equal value.¹⁴ I did not find any commentator who disagreed with this conclusion. The human creature is both male and female.

The very next verse says that God gave 'them' authority to subdue and rule over the earth. This shows that the Creator had a specific job in mind for humanity – both male and female. Theirs is a joint venture. There is agreement here as well.

Where the disagreement begins is with chapter 2 where the account of the creation of Adam and Eve is specifically related. Complementarians like Robert Culver see male priority as being reflected in the fact that Adam is created first, the woman is taken from Adam, Adam names the woman, and the woman is created for man as a helper.¹⁵ Egalitarians counter that "helper" in the Hebrew is the same word used of God as our helper (meaning it is not a term of subordination), that Eve coming from Adam

¹³ Saucy and TenElshof, 340.

¹⁴ Millard Erickson, "Christian Theology, 2nd edition," (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998), 563.

¹⁵ Culver, 31.

signifies that they are of “the same stuff,” and that it is the man who has to leave and cleave to the wife – all non-hierarchical evidences.¹⁶

My own sense is that what is being discussed in general in Genesis 1 is specifically detailed in Genesis 2. The apparent equality of Genesis 1 is qualified to be one of ontology but not of function. Mickelson’s characteristic re-translation of helper seems to miss the mark of what the word means in context. I believe that “helper” simply acknowledges that the subject’s strength is inadequate to the given task.¹⁷ No less an authority than Gordon Wenham states that the word for ‘helper’ is most properly translated ‘a helper matching him’ – a complementary designation.¹⁸ This is more consistent with its usage throughout Scripture.

Saucy and TenElshof also make a good observation that Genesis 2 reflects what will be the norm for men and women throughout the Scripture: men (Adam) focus on their tasks and women (Eve) focus on relationships.¹⁹ Indeed, Adam is working on his creational task throughout the chapter and Eve is given as a relational complement to help him in the task. This harmonizes with both natural experience and the biblical text. Though the two are equal in value and in missional calling, their functions are different.

Differences between the respective positions become even more pronounced upon consideration of Genesis 3. Once again, Mickelson represents the egalitarian thought that what is shown in the fall of humanity is that male dominance is a consequence.²⁰ This is

¹⁶ Alvera Mickelson, “An Egalitarian View: There is Neither Male Nor Female in Christ,” in *Women in Ministry: Four Views*, ed. Bonnidell and Robert G. Clouse (Downer’s Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 183. Mickelson even re-translates Genesis 2:18 as “I will make a power equal to him”

¹⁷ Saucy and TenElshof, 56.

¹⁸ Ibid, 54.

¹⁹ Ibid, 335.

²⁰ Mickelson, 184.

based on a crucial text - Genesis 3:16. This is important because the ultimate argument is that Christ came to reverse the effects of the fall – which would include male hierarchy.²¹

What concerns me about Mickelson's conclusion is that she makes no differentiation between healthy, self-giving power and coercive, selfish power.²² All power is bad and must be mitigated against at all costs. She and others of her persuasion use Matthew 20:25-26 as a proof-text that Jesus was against hierarchical power.²³ However, this is a misrepresentation of what Christ advocates. Rather, Jesus is against “lording” over others, not authority in general as is apparent in his reference to Caesar's authority when asked about taxes.

Complementarians, on the other hand, see male leadership as part of the created order, per the discussion of Genesis 1 and 2 above. Some complementarians have attempted to explain Genesis 3:16 as the beginning of the battle of the sexes since women will now want to control (another definition for ‘desire’) men.²⁴ This is based, however, on one other usage of the word ‘desire’ and totally dismisses the other usage of it in Scripture that means a sensual desire. Others see it as a moral command of God – men will rightly rule over women.²⁵

²¹ Walter Liefeld, “A Plural Ministry View: Your Sons and Your Daughters Shall Prophesy,” in *Women in Ministry: Four Views*. ed. Bonnidell and Robert G. Clouse (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 114.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Susan T. Foh, “A Male Leadership View: The Head of the Woman is the Man,” in *Women in Ministry: Four Views*. ed. Bonnidell and Robert G. Clouse (Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1989), 75.

²⁵ Barbara J. MacHaffie, “Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition,” 2nd edition, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 317.

My own sense is that this is factual statement of the facts in light of the fall – that “there will be a propensity in man to let dominion run wild...”²⁶ Though this suggestion comes from an egalitarian perspective (which thereby condemns all male leadership), I agree with the comment but apply it differently. In my view, the fall doesn’t create male leadership but does precipitate a selfish manifestation of it. Indeed, this argument is strengthened by the fact that the creation roles illustrated in Genesis 2 are part of the specific punishments delineated in Genesis 3 – Adam’s is related to his task, Eve to relationships.²⁷

Hence, God’s creational desire is for his mission to be carried out by men and women in complementary roles. However, the fall has caused a fracture in the unity that would be necessary to successfully carry out God’s directive.

C. Scripture: The General Tenor of the Bible

From Genesis on, it is apparent that male leadership is God’s intention. Male leaders are chosen by God throughout Israel’s history. God speaks to Abraham and gives him the promise of redemption. He meets with Jacob and calls the sons of Jacob to be the leaders of his people on earth. He raises up Moses to lead His people out of Egypt. He raises up Samuel, David and Solomon to lead His people. In all of these instances, God is the one choosing and He chooses men.

Egalitarians often point out that women lead in the Old Testament as well. They point out women like Miriam, Deborah and Huldah.²⁸ However, Miriam is specifically

²⁶ Mary Stewart van Leeuwen, “Christian Maturity in Light of Feminist Theory,” in *Reading in Christian Ethics: Volume 2: Issues and Applications*. ed. David K. Clark and Robert V. Rakestraw (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 307.

²⁶ Ibid, 459.

²⁷ Saucy and TenElshof, 61.

²⁸ Grenz and Kjesbo, 66-71.

said to have led the women. Grenz and Kjesbo even point to her role in challenging Moses' authority as an example of her leadership role – but this is no positive example!²⁹ Deborah's reign occurs within the book of Judges which clearly represents the downward spiral of Israel away from the ways of God. I believe that each successive judge is a further departure from the will of God for His people until the completely reprobate Samson. In Deborah's case, she is reigning because of passive males – an indictment on the lukewarm nature of Israel at the time. As for Huldah, her ministry occurs in private, not in public leadership (2 Kings 22:14-20).

In pointing out these examples, I do not seek to denigrate each woman's contributions to God's mission. Rather, they are all used admirably and beautifully as they carry out their God-given callings within the economy of God.

The data in the New Testament does not change the functional roles of women. All the commentators I read acknowledged that Jesus elevated the status of women in the way he treated them. Women, as a result of the fall, were being treated terribly in the first century. Two sad rabbinic sayings of the day reveal this attitude: "Rather should the words of the Torah be burned than to be entrusted to a woman"³⁰ and the well-known daily prayer of Jewish males thanking God that he has not made him a Gentile, a slave or a woman.³¹

Instead, Jesus broke the norms of his day by talking to a woman in broad daylight (John 4), allowing unclean women to touch him (Matthew 9:18-26), letting Mary sit at his feet like a male disciple would (Luke 10:39), and many other examples. In all of this, Jesus was bringing forth "his vision of them (women) as persons to whom and for whom

²⁹ Ibid, 68.

³⁰ MacHaffie, 2.

³¹ Wright, 3.

he had come.”³² Egalitarians take this evidence and seek to make Jesus one of theirs. However, none of this points directly to female and male functional equality. In fact, Jesus chooses men only as his apostles. I believe Jesus is reversing the unfortunate consequence of male dominance from the fall, but not male leadership. These are two different issues.

The rest of the New Testament has many instances of women participating in the work of God. In Romans 16 alone, Paul lists several women who are fellow workers in his mission. Unfortunately, egalitarians seek to stretch passages like these to fit their position. A case in point is Barbara MacHaffie who states that Apphia, together with Philemon and Archippus, “was a leader of the house church at Colossae” (Philemon 2).³³ The only problem is that this is pure conjecture: neither the word ‘leader’ nor any synonyms of it are present in the Philemon text.

Another key woman frequently mentioned is Phoebe who is called a ‘deacon’ in Romans 16. However, Paul seems to indicate that women can hold deacon-like offices (1 Timothy 3:11) without being in an authoritative position. Plus, even Grenz and Kjesbo, after several pages of talking about Phoebe, admit that in most probability she did not fill an authoritative position.³⁴ These are but a few of many instances of significant female workers who are nonetheless, not filling authoritative positions over men.

One last passage that must be addressed is Galatians 3:28. This verse strongly declares that there is “There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Egalitarians claim that this verse applies not only to soteriology (the context of Galatians 3) but also to social relationships and

³² Grenz and Kjesbo, 74.

³³ MacHaffie, 10.

³⁴ Grenz and Kjesbo, 89.

functions.³⁵ However, even an egalitarian like Wright admits that this is not accurate – the passage is not speaking of ministry, it tells us that “the ground is even at the foot of the cross.”³⁶ He then points out a helpful grammatical note. The typical translation of “neither male nor female” is incorrect. What it actually says in the Greek is, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, no male *and* female...”³⁷ Wright then states that this is a clear reference to Genesis – not that the created order is being reversed (because God had stated in Genesis 2 that it was ‘very good’) but that the consequence of male dominance from the fall is being reversed.³⁸ Amen! This conclusion actually strengthens my argument that it is male dominance and not male leadership at stake in Christ’s redemptive work. Healthy male leadership is ‘very good.’

D. Scripture: The Key Passages

The central passages that deal with women in ministry are those found in 1 Corinthians 11 and 14 as well as 1 Timothy 2. These are generally regarded as being written by the apostle Paul in response to specific issues surfacing in each respective historical setting. The question is whether the injunctions against women teaching and being in authority are historically conditioned and therefore not normative, or whether they are trans-cultural for all times and places.

In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul begins a section concerning the proper ordering of worship among the believers. Order is his prime consideration (1 Corinthians 14:40) throughout this portion of the letter. With this overall theme in mind, he begins in verse 3 by talking about the much-debated ‘head:’ “the head of every man is Christ, and the head

³⁵ Liefeld, 139.

³⁶ Wright, 3.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.” Egalitarians are quick to point out that the Greek word for ‘head,’ *kephale*, means ‘source’ not ‘authority over’ or ‘leader’ and thus conclude that complementarians have made up this latter definition.³⁹ Yet Mickelson, in defending this view, makes no good explanation of how *kephale* can be used as ‘source’ in the husbands and wives section of Ephesians 5 – a crucial cross-reference to our current passage where ‘authority over’ is clearly in view.⁴⁰ Moreover, the seven times Jesus is called the *kephale* of the church, we are made to believe that authority is not implicit...yet she doesn’t make any mention of Jesus also being called *kurios* (Lord) in those same passages.⁴¹ Clearly authority is included...probably along with the source idea.

Even Liefeld, an egalitarian, makes the point that *kephale* can mean both ‘source’ and ‘authority over’ and in fact does so in Ephesians.⁴² Saucy and TenElshof add that “an extensive study of head/body imagery in the world of the New Testament demonstrates that this interpretation of the dual function of the head in relationship to the body was the common use of the metaphor.”⁴³ Wayne Grudem also has done a thorough study of the word and found that the “authority over” meaning is well-established when used in a metaphorical sense.⁴⁴ To be a ‘head’ is to be in authority over another.

Yet, Paul tells us, this authority is to be exercised like that of God over Christ. It is characterized by a beautiful interdependency and mutual reciprocity – yet within proper roles and functions. Egalitarians counter that Christ’s submission was only

³⁹ Mickelson, 193.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 195.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Liefeld, 134. Liefeld says it means ‘authority over’ in 1:22 and ‘source’ in 4:15-16. Rightly so!

⁴³ Saucy and TenElshof, 135.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 133.

temporary, not permanent and that it isn't a paradigm for male and female relations.⁴⁵

Yet, in response to the first thought, Christ continues forever as the 'son' of God, seated at the Father's right hand; and, to the latter notion, 1 Corinthians 11:3 is expressly setting forth Jesus' submission as the norm to follow! Later in the passage (vv.11-12), the interdependency of the male and female are affirmed – yet this simply reinforces the idea that the mutuality of the Trinity is to be affirmed in healthy male/female relationships.

The female and male both do significant ministry in this passage (pray and prophesy in the church), yet it is done in such a way as to recognize the divinely created order. Verses 8 and 9 harken to the creation account and state that the man's headship is based on the woman coming from man and the woman being created for the man. Grenz and Kjesbo offer several alternative interpretations of these verses that include such thoughts as Eve being the hero of the Genesis 2 pericope.⁴⁶ However, they make no attempt to connect any of their suggestions to verse 10 which clearly speaks of the point of Paul's argument – authority; namely, female submission to male authority. None of their suggestions fit well in the context of the chapter. Rather, in light of verse 10, the natural sense is that verses 8 and 9 speak of a divinely instituted creation order.

Later, in chapter 14, Paul seems to contradict himself when he mentions that women should be silent in the church (vv.34-35). Strict complementarians tend to dismiss women's activities in chapter 11 in light of this injunction and attribute women praying and prophesying to some group context.⁴⁷ Egalitarians obviously interpret chapter 14 in light of chapter 11 and state that the silence injunction can't be absolute in light of the public activities in chapter 11.

⁴⁵ Grenz and Kjesbo, 152.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 162.

⁴⁷ Culver, 29.

Based on the findings of Kenneth Bailey's Middle-Eastern cultural studies, N.T. Wright suggests that the situation may be that women were talking among themselves while the men were debating points of Scripture and that this injunction is merely in regards to politeness.⁴⁸ He may be right. This interpretation runs between the two extremes and violates neither. Furthermore, the word for 'silent' is used three times in this section of 1 Corinthians 14 – Paul's main concern is order and peace. With this understanding, the wife disgraces her husband if she causes a disturbance by her unruliness and so she should be 'silent.'

The truly difficult passage is 1 Timothy 2:9-15. In verse 12, Paul states unequivocally, "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent." He then justifies this position by giving two reasons from creation: the man was formed first and the woman was the one deceived. As stated earlier, Wright explains this passage away by re-translating it in such a way that the opposite meaning comes through. Yet, in his explanation, he does not address Paul's first argument, the priority of man's formation, at all – which would nullify his suggestion. Mickelson mentions the priority of Adam's formation argument – but then goes right past it to the deceived argument!⁴⁹ She too avoids the creational point Paul is making.

Other egalitarians at least try to deal with all the evidence. One suggestion is that the two arguments are really one and that it reinforces the idea that the consequence of the fall was male domination.⁵⁰ However, this is based on taking the word 'for' as illustrative which, as Moo has shown, is not how Paul uses 'for' when following a

⁴⁸ Wright, 6.

⁴⁹ Mickelson, 203.

⁵⁰ Grenz and Kjesbo, 169.

directive statement such as “I do not allow...”⁵¹ Without this very tenuous usage of ‘for,’ there is no other grammatical possibility for an egalitarian position in this passage.

The only other resort is to discount the passage on other grounds – such as arguing that Paul did not write the epistle and that it was written late in the first century when the church was becoming patriarchal.⁵² Others suggest that like slavery, the issue of women in ministry has evolved over time and that we now know Christ’s full intention better.⁵³ Still others point to a heresy related to converts from the female cult of Artemis which was centered in Ephesus.⁵⁴ Regardless, all of these arguments and others like them hinge on a non-creational order argument by Paul, which subsequently hinges on the highly questionable usage of ‘for’ as illustrative rather than as causality. To me, it is best to stay with the Scripture unless there is strong reason to allow for a cultural excusing of a directive.

Granting that the creation order is in view, what exactly is Paul prohibiting? Is it all forms of teaching? All forms of authority? Is it authoritative teaching which would represent a mixture of the two verbs? First of all, it must be allowed that women did teach in the early church. The classic example is Priscilla who taught Apollos, an educated man, the way of the Lord (Acts 18:26). Yet even here there is pause for caution. The word used here carries the meaning of ‘explaining’ versus ‘teaching.’ It is not the usual *didasko* verb. Plus, this instruction occurs in private, not in a public, formal setting.

⁵¹ Saucy and TenElshof, 124.

⁵² MacHaffie, 6.

⁵³ Thomas Oden, “Women in the Pastoral Office,” in *Reading in Christian Ethics: Volume 2: Issues and Applications*. ed. David K. Clark and Robert V. Rakestraw (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996), 320.

⁵⁴ Mickelson, 201-2.

In spite of this being the lone example, it is not a stretch to consider that other teaching of this sort occurred in the early church.⁵⁵ There is still teaching of some kind going on here. One thing that is certain is that no woman in the New Testament appears in any authoritative position in the church.⁵⁶ The lone potential exception here is the contentious Romans 16:7 mention of a Junias who was ‘outstanding among the apostles.’ Many commentators point out that the best Greek manuscripts have the feminine Junia (a very common female name) and that the oft-translated male Junias is a name that is unknown in antiquity.⁵⁷ This would seem to suggest a female apostle. However, the text can also be translated that Junia was ‘well-regarded *by* the apostles.’ Otherwise, it seems quite beguiling of Paul to mention a female apostle in such a cavalier way.

The preceding section seems to indicate that women can do some kind of teaching but they are not to exercise authority over men. 1 Timothy is part of a triad of letters often called ‘The Pastorals’ and they are particularly concerned about combating heresy by the effective passing on of the tradition – the authoritative doctrine of the church.⁵⁸ Specifically, the word (and its cognates) *didasko* is consistently used of authoritative teaching in the Pastorals.⁵⁹ With this in mind, the combining of ‘teach’ with ‘exercise authority’ in 1 Timothy 2:12 would lend credence that it is authoritative teaching that Paul has in mind with this passage.

The other key infinitive in this verse is ‘exercise authority.’ This is a challenging word in the Greek – *authentein*. It appears only this once in the New Testament and it is

⁵⁵ Saucy and TenElshof, 168.

⁵⁶ Ibid, 172.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 177.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 303.

⁵⁹ Ibid, 304.

hotly debated whether the word was used in a negative or neutral sense in Paul's day.⁶⁰ Instead of pitting either side's grammarians against each other (to no clear avail), it seems to me that once again the overall thrust of the Pastorals is the preservation of the tradition – authoritative teaching. With that in mind and with the use of *didasko* right before it, the weight of evidence points to 'exercising authority over' as being the prime meaning of *authentein*.

One more point must be considered in this crucial passage. The word which connects these two infinitives is the term *oude* which means 'or.' It is generally agreed that *oude* usually joins together two closely related words with the latter one extending or elaborating on the first one.⁶¹ Since the context is in relation to women teaching men and is then followed by the guidelines for filing the authoritative office of an overseer, it would seem reasonable to deduce that this passage is prohibiting women from conducting any authoritative teaching over men.⁶² As the early church father John Chrysostom put it, "Paul in 1 Timothy 2:12 does not forbid a woman from all teaching. Paul is only prohibiting the headship of women in the Christian community."⁶³

III. Men and Women: In Ministry Today

In light of my conclusion, what can women do today? First of all, I agree with those complementarians like Susan Foh who assert that our concern for male headship has sometimes caused us to go to the extreme and limit women's role in ministry too much – a sad waste of God's gifts in them.⁶⁴ Women should not hold the offices of elder

⁶⁰ Grenz and Kjesbo, 132-3. A negative sense would aid the egalitarian cause since it would not be speaking of an authoritative position, while a neutral sense would aid the complementarian view.

⁶¹ Saucy and TenElshof, 306.

⁶² Ibid, 307.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Foh, 94.

or pastor in the church since these ones are responsible for authoritative teaching.

However, that would seem to open the door to teaching ministries which do not entail authoritative teaching such as Sunday school teaching, small group leading, bible college and seminary teaching positions. As we look to begin a church-based seminary here at Wintonbury, we need to decide where we fall on this issue. Will we allow a woman teacher like a Jeanine Brown at Bethel? I believe we can and should. What a great way to affirm the gift of teaching in a woman at Wintonbury.

Saucy and TenElshof make an interesting observation that there is a difference between interpreting the genders as strict role differences and rather as complementary differences that enable the roles.⁶⁵ They give marriage as an example: the man leads but the woman is not passive in that leading; rather she uses her unique gifts to work together with the husband in accomplishing the tasks of the home.⁶⁶ At times, a husband may even delegate a leadership responsibility in the home to the wife. This is still a picture of male leadership.

Applied to the church, a woman should be able to do anything less than authoritative teaching as long as she is doing so in cooperation with and under the blessing of her spiritual authority. Hence, if approved by the leadership, a woman should be allowed to lead worship, share devotionally in the service, teach outside the main service, provide spiritual guidance to groups and individuals, etc... At Wintonbury, I believe we should let women help the elders and pastors with our strategic direction and seek them out for counsel regarding thorny issues. Women have much to offer in terms of insight and emotional sensitivity – men would do well to listen to them.

⁶⁵ Saucy and TenElshof, 315.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Lastly, we need to remember that the general encouragements in Scripture to minister to one another using the gifts God has given each one are often not gender specific. For instance, Colossians 3:16 encourages believers to teach the Word to one another, 1 Corinthians 12 (in the midst of the male and female discussion) encourages believers to use their gifts liberally, Romans 12:6-8 says that teachers and leaders and others should use their gifts diligently.⁶⁷ All these passages are directed to all believers in the community of faith. Saucy and TenElshof put it well, “The truth of the prohibition (Pauline) representing the order in the complementarity between men and women must not be allowed to stifle the latter truth of the mutual need of man and woman for the ministry of each other, including the ministry of the Word.”⁶⁸ May we learn to allow the ‘Danica Patricks’ in our churches to race around the race track of ministry at full speed without crashing outside the boundaries of God’s wisdom in creation! Amen!

⁶⁷ Interestingly, the NIV inserts ‘man’ here though the Greek has no mention of it.

⁶⁸ Saucy and TenElshof, 322.

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