

# THE CONTROVERSY OF WOMEN PASTORS

## INTRODUCTION

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- This issue has garnered much controversy especially since a number of denominations have embraced women pastors/elders in recent years

### The Major U.S. Religious Traditions That Ordain Women

YES Group generally allows ordination of women	NO Group generally does not allow ordination of women
American Baptist Church	Jewish Orthodox
Buddhist	Latter Day Saints (Mormon)
Episcopal Church	Missouri Synod Lutheran
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America	Muslim
Jewish: Reform and Conservative Movements	Orthodox Church in America
Presbyterian Church (USA)	Southern Baptist Convention
United Church of Christ	Roman Catholic Church
Unitarian Universalist	
United Methodist Church	
Pentecostal Church of God	
Assemblies of God	
African Methodist Episcopal	

- Also, organizations such as *Christians for Biblical Equality* promote the idea that there should be complete equality between men and women in regards to their roles

Christians for Biblical Equality (CBE) is a nonprofit organization of Christian men and women who believe that the Bible, properly interpreted, teaches the fundamental equality of men and women of all ethnic groups, all economic classes, and all age groups, based on the teachings of Scriptures such as Galatians 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” CBE affirms and promotes the biblical truth that all believers—without regard to gender, ethnicity or class—must exercise their God-given gifts with equal authority and equal responsibility in church, home, and world.

- These are evidences of how controversial an issue this is

## AN IMPORTANT ASSUMPTION TO BEGIN WITH

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- Women possess a vital role within the church which is clear in a number of ways:

- Men and women are equal in terms of both being created in God’s image

**Genesis 1:27** ~ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them

**Matthew 19:4** ~ And He answered and said, “Have you not read that He who created *them* from the beginning MADE THEM MALE AND FEMALE

## 2. Men and women are equal in terms of both having the same value in Christ

**Galatians 3:28** ~ There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

## 3. Numerous women in Scripture are commended for their usefulness to the kingdom

**Romans 16:1** ~ I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea

**Acts 18:26** ~ and he [Apollos] began to speak out boldly in the synagogue. But when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately

## 4. Older women are instructed to teach younger women

**Titus 2:3** ~ Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good

## 5. Women have spiritual gifts to exercise within the body of Christ for its edification

**Romans 12:6-8** ~ Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them accordingly*: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness

**1 Corinthians 12:7** ~ But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good

- So it is crucial at the outset to establish this assumption: Women have an important and significant ministry within the church!
- The church could not be what God intended it to be if women did not fulfill their ministry in the church!

We affirm that, while God in His Word has ordained differences in their function, both men and women are created in the image of God and are joint heirs in the kingdom. The Scriptures provide a strong basis for the value of women, both as persons and as participants in the life of the redeemed community. We, too, value the very significant participation that women have in the life of Maranatha. Our desire is to affirm, support and encourage women in the use of their God-given gifts and abilities to their fullest extent within the biblical guidelines for the glory of God.

MBC Leadership Philosophy

## THE OFFICE OF ELDER/PASTOR IS RESERVED FOR MEN

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- While men and women are equal in value, there are significant differences in the roles of men and women

### God's Design for Role Relationships Supports This

- Gen 1:27 indicates that men and women are created equal in value
- However, despite men and women having the same value before the Lord, they possess different functions

**Genesis 2:18-24** ~ Then the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought *them* to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The LORD God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

- From the beginning the man had the place of headship and the woman was the one for whom that headship was provided.....This is evident from 3 facts:

### 1. God created Adam first

- God created the man before he created the woman; before Eve was formed...
  - God placed Adam in the garden to care for it – Gen 2:15
  - God commanded Adam not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil – Gen 2:16-17
  - God brought animals for Adam to name – Gen 2:19

### 2. God created the woman out of man

- God made the man out of dust of the ground (Gen 2:7); but God made woman from the side of the man (Gen 2:21-22)
- This highlights the differences in role between men and women

**1 Corinthians 11:3, 7-8**~ But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ...For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man. For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man.

- In that passage, Paul reminds us about God's chain of command in the family: It starts with God the Father and moves to God the Son, the man, and finally, the woman
- Note that within the Trinity, there is authority and submission.

### 3. God created the woman for man

- In Genesis 2:18, God says that it is not good for man to be alone so He makes him a suitable helper
- “suitable” means “a counterpart...one who completes what is missing in man...one who is both opposite and proper for him”
- This is the first statement in the Bible concerning the woman’s role: she is to be a help to man

**1 Corinthians 11:9** ~ for indeed man was not created for the woman’s sake, but woman for the man’s sake

- Man was created first, and woman was derived from him to assist him and complete him
- So, men and women are created equal in the image of God but are different in function and relationship roles
- And it is important to note that this was His plan even before the fall and the curse (i.e. the roles of men and women are not a result of the curse)
- The rest of Scripture supports these role relationships

**Ephesians 5:22-24** ~ Wives, *be subject* to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself *being* the Savior of the body. But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives *ought to be* to their husbands in everything

**Colossians 3:18** ~ Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord

**1 Timothy 5:14** ~ Therefore I want younger *widows* to get married, bear children, keep house, and give the enemy no occasion for reproach

**Titus 2:3-5** ~ Older women likewise are to be reverent in their behavior, not malicious gossips nor enslaved to much wine, teaching what is good, so that they may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, *to be* sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being subject to their own husbands, so that the word of God will not be dishonored

**1 Peter 3:1-6** ~ In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any *of them* are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior. Your adornment must not be *merely* external—braiding the hair, and wearing gold jewelry, or putting on dresses; but *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the imperishable quality of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is precious in the sight of God. For in this way in former times the holy women also, who hoped in God, used to adorn themselves, being submissive to their own husbands; just as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.

## The Pattern in Scripture for Spiritual Leadership Supports This

### Old Testament Pattern

- While women were involved in the religious life of Israel, they were generally not the leaders
  - The patriarchs were all men (Abraham, Isaac, Jacob)
  - The first leaders of the nation of Israel were men (Moses and Joshua)
  - The judges of Israel were all men (except Deborah...she was the exception not the rule, and even she declined to lead the military campaign against the Canaanites, deferring instead to Barak)
  - The kings of Israel were all men (except Athaliah, but she didn't rule over the whole nation of Israel and she usurped the throne)
  - All of the OT prophets were men (there were women who were called prophetesses like Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and Isaiah's wife, but none had a permanent calling to that ministry)
  - All of the OT priests were men
  - Although there are 2 OT books about women (Ruth, Esther), no woman wrote an OT book

### New Testament Pattern

- Whereas Greek, Roman, and Jewish cultures viewed women almost as possessions, Jesus showed love to women and showed them to be equal in standing to men
  - He spoke to the woman at the well and revealed that He was the Messiah to her (John 4)
  - He healed the woman who was bent double (Luke 13:11-13)
  - He healed the woman with a bleeding disorder (Mark 5:25-29)
  - He traveled with women (Luke 8:1-3)
  - He appeared first to Mary Magdalene in His resurrection (John 20)
- But Jesus did not exalt women to the place of leadership over men
  - Jesus personally trained and appointed twelve men as apostles
  - Even when a replacement for Judas was necessary, only men were considered (Acts 1:21)
  - No woman fulfilled the role of an apostle in the NT
- The 12 apostles followed the example of Christ by appointing 7 men when they needed to establish an official body of servants to care for the church's widows and funds (Acts 6)
- It was the apostles who took the lead in the early church
- Women were involved in ministry in the early church but never in a way that usurped the role of men
  - Women were included within the 120 believers in Jerusalem (Acts 1:14)
  - Dorcas is commended for her deeds (Acts 9:36)
  - Lydia was the first convert in Europe (Acts 16:14)
  - Women responded to the Gospel preached by Paul and Silas (Acts 17:4)
  - Priscilla, along with her husband Aquila, showed Apollos the way more clearly (Acts 18:26)

- Phoebe was commended for her service (Rom 16:1)
- Euodia and Syntyche are commended as fellow Gospel co-laborers with Paul (Phil 4:2-3)
- Timothy's grandmother and mother are commended for their godly influence on him (2 Tim 1:5)
- However, it was the apostles who took the lead in the early church
- There are a number of other evidences of this:
  - All the NT books were written by men
  - The NT nowhere records a sermon or teaching of a woman
  - No women were appointed as elders or pastors
  - The chief missionary activity in the book of Acts was done by men
  - And leadership in the churches was entrusted to men (Timothy, Titus, etc.)

### **Instructions in Scripture Regarding Church Leadership Support This**

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- There are specific passages in the NT that give clear instructions about spiritual leadership within the church

**1 Corinthians 14:34-35** ~ 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

- The context here is prophecy, the act of speaking God's Word when the body is gathered together corporately
- Paul says that women are not to have a public speaking ministry over the body in that setting
- Instead, women are to discuss issues with their husbands home, outside of the corporate gathering of believers
- This is because God has established the proper order and relationship of male-female roles in the church
- Women may be highly gifted teachers and leaders, but those gifts are not to be exercised over men in the services of the church
- To clarify, this is not saying that a woman cannot share a testimony....or sing a solo...or be part of a choir...or even speak about spiritual things in a small group or other informal setting

**1 Timothy 2:9-15** ~ Likewise, *I want* women to adorn themselves with proper clothing, modestly and discreetly, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly garments, but rather by means of good works, as is proper for women making a claim to godliness. A woman must quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, *and* then Eve. And *it was* not Adam *who* was deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. But *women* will be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint

- 1 Timothy is an instruction manual for the church and chapter 2 describes how the church should function when gathered together
- In vs. 11-12, Paul says that when it comes to the public worship service, women are to be learners, not teachers
- The word "quiet" appears twice in these verses – shows that they are to not engage in a speaking ministry in the corporate church service
- The word "submissiveness" reflects the heart of a humble learner
- Thus, according to Paul women are not to: 1) teach in a worship service; 2) exercise authority over a man
- In vs. 13-14, Paul appeals to the creation order to show this is not just a cultural issue or the result of the fall
- First, Adam was created first (spiritual headship)
- Second, Adam, was not deceived, but Eve was....she was not suited by nature to assume the position of ultimate responsibility – that was Adam's role....when she stepped out from under the protection and leadership of Adam, she was highly vulnerable and fell into sin

- Although Paul prohibits women from assuming spiritual leadership within the church, he shows in vs. 15 the place where women can have the greatest impact
- Women have a huge ministry in the home where they get to “reverse the curse” by bringing up godly children
- Paul’s point is that while a woman may have led the race into sin, women have the privilege of leading the race out of sin to godliness

**1 Timothy 3:1-5** ~ It is a trustworthy statement: if any **man** aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work **he** desires *to do*. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, **the husband of one wife**, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. **He must be** one who manages **his** own household well, keeping **his** children under control with all dignity (but if **a man** does not know how to manage **his** own household, how will **he** take care of the church of God?)

- Notice the emphasis on male elders in this passage: husband of one wife...manage his own household
- Same is true in the parallel passage in Titus 1:

**Titus 1:6, 9** ~ namely, if any **man** is above reproach, the **husband of one wife**, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion...holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that **he** will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict

## **Summary**

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- Women are vital to the ministry of any local church – they possess spiritual gifts...they can have a huge impact by teaching children and discipling other women...they provide an invaluable ministry to their husbands and children...there are a plethora of ways that women can be used of the Lord both inside the church and outside
- But when it comes to the formal life of the church, the teaching and oversight responsibility is to be in the hands of men