

OAKHILLS C H U R C H

**A STUDY OF THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE CHURCH
BY THE DOCTRINAL ADVISORY GROUP**

Study Published: November, 2011

Oak Hills Church · 6929 Camp Bullis Rd., San Antonio, TX 78256 · (210) 698-6868

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	Page 3
A statement from Steve Green, chairman of the Oak Hills Elders, about how this report was commissioned, how it developed, and how its conclusions are influencing decisions of the Oak Hills Church.	
Conclusion	Page 6
The summary of the unanimous conclusion of the Doctrinal Advisory Group upon completion of the study.	
Overview	Page 9
A description of the team and its approach and process.	
Discussion of Scripture	Page 12
A discussion of each major biblical text the team studied.	
Key Concepts	Page 24
A summary of a few of the concepts that became key to the study.	
Team Statements	Page 35
Each team member includes a statement that represents his/her journey and thoughts regarding the study.	
Chairman's Report	Page 53
A personal document written by the Chairman, Chuck Cunningham.	
Addendum to Chairman's Report	Page 107
A discussion of whether scripture restricts women from serving as elders.	
Recommendations	Page 111
Specific next steps recommended as a result of this report.	
Executive Summary	Page 114
A statement of the Coordinating Committee to the entire body of elders regarding their study and conclusions.	
Resources	Page 117
A bibliography of the sources that the Doctrinal Advisory Group reviewed and discussed together during the study.	

PREFACE

The Role of Women in the Church

From time to time issues that were thought to be long ago resolved prove not to be. Such was the case in the summer of 2007 when the Coordinating Board of elders established a Doctrinal Advisory Group to study the role of women in the church. While it was not the first time the topic had been discussed at the Oak Hills Church, it seemed it was the right time to engage in a serious and thoughtful study. The Doctrinal Advisory Group was chaired by one of the Oak Hills Church (OHC) elders, Chuck Cunningham. Serving with Cunningham were long time members Joy Pruett, Davida Lambert, Cheryl Green, OHC minister Rod Chisholm, Executive Minister Mark Tidwell as well as two other OHC elders, Richard Smith and Rick Powell. This group was formed and charged by the elders to begin their work in July 2007. After a long period of study, interrupted by the sad passing of Chuck Cunningham, the initial completed report was presented to the Coordinating Board in July 2009 by Richard Smith who succeeded Cunningham as Chairman. Although Chuck Cunningham fell ill and passed away before the report was presented, he authored a draft of his Chairman's Report which was included in the final study.

The Doctrinal Advisory Group was asked to assess and evaluate the practice of the Oak Hills Church on all campuses by addressing two essential questions:

- 1) Are women allowed to serve in leadership or service roles according to their gifts?
- 2) Which leadership or service roles are restricted for women?

Phrased differently, "Are there any leadership or service roles at OHC in which women are not permitted to serve?" Given the important roles women currently occupy in the Oak Hills Church (which include worship and teaching), this assignment may seem unnecessary or even a bit odd to some, especially in light of the remarkable gifts and skills possessed by women. It was however concluded by the Coordinating Board of elders that studying the role of women in the church was both timely and necessary.

The group committed themselves to a thorough and scholarly study of the bible focusing their research and analysis on male and female roles contained in scripture, beginning in Genesis and following the theme of gender roles throughout the New Testament. Individually and collectively they determined to keep personal bias or experience from influencing their efforts and conclusions. Consequently their emphasis was on examining relevant biblical texts and attempting to apply them in the contemporary church setting. Upon reading the report, it is clear they accomplished their objective to present a biblically sound exploration of the topic. It was also important for members of this group to establish their research and conclusions against a backdrop of other scholarly works on the subject.

Contained within the report presented in July 2009 were the findings and recommendations to the Coordinating Committee consisting of: Five elders elected from among our overall elder body who work with Senior Minister, Randy Frazee; Executive Minister, Mark Tidwell

(charged with managing the daily affairs of the church); and Minister of Preaching, Max Lucado. Central among the findings was the statement, *“We agree and conclude that the bible teaches full equality of men and women in status, giftedness and opportunity for ministry and that the church is best served when men and women share responsibilities and serve together as complementary partners.”* They also offered a few recommendations in the report’s conclusion. Shortly after presenting the report, the group was invited to an informal meeting with the Coordinating Committee to discuss the report. This meeting resulted in a request for more specific recommendations. In the final recommendations to the Coordinating Committee, they requested that the Coordinating Committee not simply receive the report, but also would carefully study the role of women in the church with the ultimate goal to expand the study to the greater body of church leadership. They also suggested a clear pathway be identified to introduce the Oak Hills Church to the study which would culminate in the application of changes deemed by the elders to be both biblically sound and appropriate for the Oak Hills Church.

During the following year and consistent with the recommendations, the Coordinating Committee began a review of the report closely examining their findings and recommendations while applying relevant biblical texts to their study. This review and study resulted in a consensus of the Coordinating Committee that women may serve in any leadership role with the exception being that of elder. The Coordinating Committee cited their study of the biblical text as the basis for consensus. The consensus was reported to the complete elder body in the summer of 2010.

Following the report of the Coordinating Committee, the entire elder body (61 in total) commenced a review and study of the report similar to that of the Coordinating Committee. Randy Frazee, Senior Minister, was asked to lead the elder body in examining the biblical text and findings contained in the report. Their study began in September 2010 and was completed February 2011. In March 2011 the complete body of elders was asked to consider and cast their vote on two issues:

- 1) Based on my study and understanding of scripture, women may serve in any and all areas of Oak Hills Church public worship.
- 2) Based on my study and understanding of scripture, women may serve as elders of the Oak Hills Church.

Issue one was decided in the affirmative by the elders, while issue two was not affirmed. While neither of the issues was decided by unanimous vote, both were determined by clear majorities. It is noteworthy that, while the two issues addressed by a vote of the elders were not explicitly found in the report, they were both dealt with implicitly in their concluding paragraph reflected above and restated here: *“We agree and conclude that the Bible teaches full equality of men and women in status, giftedness and opportunity for ministry and that the church is best served when men and women share responsibilities and serve together as complementary partners.”*

Following the elders’ review of the report and its findings, along with their collective study, the elders asked Senior Minister Frazee and Executive Minister Tidwell to work with their

leadership team to develop ideas and processes for implementing the decision of the elders as it relates to the role of women in the public worship of the Oak Hills Church. The elders also asked the Coordinating Committee to meet with the Doctrinal Advisory Group one final time to express their gratitude for their excellent work. In keeping with the OHC culture of openness and transparency, the Coordinating Committee also determined to report to the church the work of this group and the elders, the conclusions that were drawn and the subsequent decisions made.

Challenging issues aren't always resolved; and rarely are they resolved for all time. However, it is a virtual certainty that unless they are acknowledged and discussed in the light of biblical truth very little, if any, progress will be achieved. The leadership of the Oak Hills Church asks that the congregation pray that God will be glorified as we progress in our efforts to fully develop the roles of women and men for service.

Article published for the Oak Hills Church newspaper, *The Crossings*
October 2011

By: Steve Green, Chairman of the Elders

CONCLUSION

The statement of the Doctrinal Advisory Group's conclusion came after a study process which occurred over a period of two years. In this recounting of that process, we begin by telling the outcome, but the experience of participating in the study was not that way at all.

In one of the earliest DAG meetings, we discussed the possibilities based on our findings and our conclusions. We faced the reality that Oak Hills Church already had some women leading worship, teaching adult classes, and leading various ministries. Depending on our findings and what the elders would decide subsequently, these women could lose the privilege of serving. Nevertheless, we were committed to an open study of our assigned topic and we had no way of predicting the outcome.

The truth is we were surprised to find our entire group in agreement at the end. We praised God that we were able to submit to the Coordinating Committee of elders a unanimous conclusion.

The process by which we produced the Conclusion was familiar to us by the time we reached the end of our inquiry. We formed a sub-committee to draft a first attempt at articulating our findings; then we continued as a group to edit and rework it until we ran out of suggestions for revisions. Our final product follows.

The DAG

Conclusion

Although we began our study with each member of the Doctrinal Advisory Group at a different place, we now present our findings in unanimous agreement with the following conclusion.

We believe the Bible teaches that men and women were created by God and equally bear His image. God's intention was for the man and woman to be one with each other in His image, thereby reflecting the intimacy and love that exists between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the three spirits of the Godhead (Gen. 1:27). Man and woman each had a direct relationship with God and they shared equally in having dominion over the created order (Gen. 1:26-28). However, this perfect union disappeared when Adam and Eve sinned. The struggle for power and the desire to "rule over" another is a result of human sin. We read Genesis 3:16 as a prediction of the effects of sin's entrance into the world and not as a prescription of God's ideal order.

However, through Christ, God has brought redemption to human beings, male and female alike (Gal. 3:26-28), and has made a way for people to once again be one with him in a community of believers, the church. The Apostle Paul exhorts Christian husbands and wives to submit to one another, to love and respect each other that they might be one with each other. In this way, they model God's ideal, intimate unity among members of the body of Christ as well as the unity between the church and Christ, its head (Eph. 5:21-33). Jesus prayed that the church would model oneness (John 17:11, 20-23). This means we are all sons of God, we are one with each other, and we are "one in Christ Jesus".

In his life on earth, Jesus accepted women as disciples and supporters of his ministry (Luke 8:2-3, 10:38-42). He interacted with women in a way which was drastically counter to the culture in which he lived (John 4:9). We interpret his behavior as a message from God about his acceptance of women.

When the church was established at Pentecost, the Holy Spirit was poured out on women and men alike, as had been predicted long before the coming of Christ (Joel 2:28, Acts 2:18). In the New Testament, women as well as men prayed and prophesied in the church (Acts 2:17-18, 1 Cor. 11:4-5, and 1 Pet. 2:9-10). Further, the Spirit bestows gifts on all those in the community of believers, without giving preferential treatment based on gender (Acts 2:1-21, 1 Cor. 12:7, 11). Every believer is to offer his or her gifts for the benefit of the Body of Christ (Rom. 12:4-8, 1 Pet. 4:10-11).

We believe that the Bible is the Word of God and sole authority for the study of gender issues and all other issues in the church. However, we find that the prevailing ways of interpreting the Bible often fail us in studying a complex issue such as this. The few texts that appear to restrict participation of women in the church (such as 1 Cor. 14:33 and 1 Tim. 2:11-12) were written in letters to particular churches with specific problems. We believe these verses must be interpreted in relation to the broader teaching of scripture beginning

in Gen. 1-3. Also, the cultural and situational contexts in which they were written and the contemporary cultural context in which we are compelled to apply them must be taken into account. This requires that we seek, from the context, the purpose of an instruction written to an early church. Although the process of studying such issues is a challenge, we found it within the abilities of ordinary Bible students.

We agree and conclude that the Bible teaches full equality of men and women in status, giftedness, and opportunity for ministry and that the church is best served when men and women share responsibilities and serve together as complementary partners.

OVERVIEW

In 2007, the Oak Hills Coordinating Committee, consisting of the senior ministerial staff and the coordinating elders commissioned a Doctrinal Advisory Group (DAG) to study the issue of women's role in the church. Chuck Cunningham, an elder and respected Bible teacher, was appointed chairman. The charge of the DAG was given to Chuck verbally by the Coordinating Committee.

The first work of the DAG was to understand, articulate, and analyze the task assigned to them. The group verbally questioned, discussed, and analyzed the task, and a summary of the task was put in writing. The summarizing document was then subjected to feedback, editing and revisions by the group. The process was considered finished when the group reached consensus on the written document which then served as a set of guidelines for the study.

This same process was applied in several areas: to a statement of the task, a list of shared values to be protected in the study process, a list of principles for disciplined exegesis of scriptures, a list of the particular scriptures which would be selected for study, and finally a cumulative list of the primary findings of the DAG.

In the end, these individual documents that were so valuable in constructing our strategy for engaging our task, were not preserved as part of the DAG report. However, the document which follows represents a summary of all the main points of those exercises.

The DAG

Overview

Doctrinal Advisory Group:

The Coordinating Committee of Elders commissioned a group to study the role of women in the church. This group consisted of Chuck Cunningham (Chair), Mark Tidwell, Joy Pruett, Richard Smith, Cheryl Green, Rod Chisholm, Rick Powell, and Davida Lambert.

The group's task, process and conclusions are summarized below, followed by supporting documentation.

Task:

- Assess the Oak Hills Church current practice at all sites with respect to the issue.
 - Are women allowed to serve in leadership or service roles according to their gifts?
 - Which leadership or service roles are restricted for women?
- Research what the Bible says about male/female roles in the church.
 - Does scripture restrict roles of leadership and service for women?
 - How should the relevant biblical passages be applied in the church today?
- Research how these scriptures are interpreted by proponents of various points of view. What are the reasonable options?
- Evaluate whether the Oak Hills Church practices comply with its understanding of the relevant biblical practices.
 - Is there biblical support for current practice?
 - Are there biblical reasons for suggesting changes?
 - What weight should accepted cultural practices have in the church?

Guiding Principles:

- Respect for the authority of scripture and obedience to God's Word.
- Commitment to pray for guidance and to depend on the Holy Spirit to be our guide and teacher.
- Respect for both men and women as co-heirs of God's grace.
- Acknowledgement of the individual giftedness of all believers and encouragement of the exercise of those gifts to God's glory.
- Understanding aspects of culture which affect both interpretation and application of scripture.
- Continuing commitment to a servant-leader model of leadership in the church.

Approach to Scripture:

(See "How to Read the Bible for All It's Worth" by Douglas Stuart and Gordon Fee.)

- The Bible is the authoritative word of God.
- God's message was written down by humans within history by direction of the Holy Spirit.

- Scripture must be interpreted within the historical and literary context in which it was written.
- Principles can be determined (exegesis) and applied to our situations today (hermeneutics).
- A text cannot mean what it could never have meant to its author or original readers.
- The Bible is consistent – it does not contradict itself.

Primary Scriptures Considered:

(See “Discussion of Scripture” tab)

All scriptures were read and studied within the context of the whole book as well as the specific passage, considering the historical and literary context, and as interpreted by various scholars.

- Genesis 1-3
- Various passages from the Gospels about Jesus and women.
- Acts 2
- Galatians 3:28
- Ephesians 5:21-33
- 1 Corinthians 11:2-16
- 1 Corinthians 14:34-35
- 1 Timothy 2:9-15
- 1 Peter

Primary Principles Discovered:

- God created male and female in his image. They equally had dominion over the earth. After The Fall, men began to rule over women.
- Through the redemptive work of Christ, male and female can be reconciled and the two can be one, as God intended.
- While on earth, Jesus elevated women beyond their status at the time.
- Women were to pray and prophesy in the assembly in Paul’s day. Therefore, the rule that women were to “keep silent” could not refer to praying and prophesying.
- There are few scriptures that describe the worship assembly. Most of them have to do with behavior and dress rather than liturgy.
- We are to be culturally sensitive and behave in such a way that the gospel message will be heard and believed.
- Leadership roles were assigned to both men and women in scripture.
- We are all commanded to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

DISCUSSION OF SCRIPTURE

The study of each passage included in this project began with a determination of the background of the book of the Bible in which it is found. The book was studied overall in order to establish the context of the particular passage under consideration, and then it was read and discussed verse by verse. This process was led by the chairman of the DAG or his designee from the group. All participated in discussing and questioning the text, and contributed relevant materials from their individual preparation.

For each passage, the findings of the group were summarized in writing by one member and resubmitted in a later meeting for approval or revision by the group. The pages that follow are the final products of that process.

The DAG

Genesis 1 – 3

In Genesis 1-3 man and woman were created to be one, manifesting the image of God (Gen. 1:27). They had an intimate relationship with each other (Gen. 2:24), and the potential to be obedient children of God, enjoying his daily presence and guidance as they received life from him. In Eden, they were offered the Tree of Life but were denied the Knowledge of Good and Evil. They turned away from life directed by God and chose to be independent of their creator. They wanted to know and choose between good and evil for themselves. In choosing god-like autonomy (Gen. 3:22), they fell away from the loving father and corrupted the relationship between man and woman. This caused God to pronounce consequences including death, a curse upon the ground, pain in childbearing, and division in the union of man and woman so that he would rule over her (Gen. 3:16).

The original relationship between man and woman as created by God, was not hierarchical. It was the union of two equal but wonderfully different individuals both made in God's image. The rule of man over woman came as part of the curse of the Fall.

In Gen. 3:15, we see the earliest reference to God's plan for redeeming his children. It would be through the offspring of woman (an apparent reference to the Virgin Birth) that Satan would be crushed.

We see in Gen. 2:24, God's original and ongoing purpose for man and woman –“and they will become one flesh.” Gen. 2:24 is quoted four times in the New Testament. In Mark 10:7-8 and Matt. 19:5 Jesus quotes this passage to describe God's purpose for marriage. Paul refers to it in 1 Cor. 6:16 as a warning against sexual immorality, and in Eph. 5:31 both as an admonition for married men and women and as a metaphor for the union of Christ and His Church. Dare we dream that in Christ, the God-intended unity and intimacy of married man and woman may be restored? God's idea of marriage is void of shame and blame, and is without ruling and subordination. The ideal marriage flourishes with both partners honoring and obeying God, and as a result, loving and honoring each other.

The Gospels – Jesus and Women

The New Testament stories of Jesus's interactions with women show him behaving in ways very much counter to the cultural norms. In the Gospels we see Jesus –

- having conversations with women (the Samaritan woman, John 4; the Canaanite woman, Matt. 15:21-28; and Martha, John 11:21-27),
- touching women as he healed them (the raising of the ruler's daughter and the healing of the woman with the issue of blood in Matt. 9:18-26; the crippled woman on the Sabbath in Luke 13:13),
- defending women from criticism and accusation and offering them salvation (the woman caught in adultery, John 8:1-11; the sinful woman who anointed Jesus, Luke 7:36-48),
- accepting worship from women (John 12:1-7; women weeping for Jesus as he walked to his crucifixion, Luke 23:27-28),
- accepting women disciples (Mary of Bethany, Luke 10:38-42; the women who followed him from Galilee, Luke 8:2-3; the women at the Cross, Matt. 27:55), and
- commissioning women to be witnesses of the resurrection (Matt. 28:8-10).

Coming as a descendant of Abraham and Son of David, Jesus was an observant Jew. He frequented the synagogue (Luke 4:16); he taught in the Temple Courts (Mark 14:49); he quoted from Jewish scripture more times than we can reference; he observed the Feasts (the Passover, John 2:23; the Feast of the Tabernacles, John 7:2); he paid the Temple tax (Matt. 17:27). Yet, he purposefully departed from the Jewish customs for men which restricted interaction with women. We conclude that Jesus, by his example was an advocate for cultural change and a messenger from heaven declaring the acceptance of the Father for daughters.

Acts 2

Acts 2 is formative for the Church. In this chapter the Holy Spirit, who had been promised by Jesus before his ascension, comes down upon believers. It is theologically significant that women are specifically included as recipients of the Spirit in the telling of the story. We note the following –

- Women were among the disciples who were waiting and praying (Acts 1:3-5; 13-14).
- The prophecy of Joel, which is quoted by Peter, says, “Your sons and daughters will prophesy; ...even on my servants both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit”
- The gift of the Holy Spirit was promised “for you and your children and for all who are far off,” inclusive of men and women.

1 Corinthians 11

This is a passage written by Paul which addresses a troublesome situation with the women in the church at Corinth. It is an especially difficult text for us because we are not familiar with the cultural practices concerning head coverings and hair lengths in the early church at Corinth. Also, Paul uses a play on the word “head,” sometimes being literal and, sometimes symbolically referring to one having headship. Another difficulty is that Paul uses an argument, which, apparently, was familiar to his original readers, but from a source unknown to us when he says most literally, “because of this the woman ought to have authority on the head because of the angels.” We are unable to interpret some of this passage. We do engage three issues from the text –

- Does verse 3 advocate a linear hierarchy of spiritual authority?

Possibly. It can be argued either way, but this is certainly not the point of the passage. Starting in 1 Cor. 9:19-23 and continuing in 1 Cor. 10:23-33, Paul writes about accommodating behavior to be able to influence and to be received by non-believers for the sake of their own salvation (see 1 Cor. 9:19, 22 and 10:33) and thus, for the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). This is the immediate context of 1 Cor. 11, thus the NIV editors title the section “Propriety in Worship.”

The only mention of authority in the text is in verse 10, which literally says, “Because of this the woman ought to have authority on the head, because of the angels.” A traditional interpretation is that the woman should wear a sign of her husband’s authority over her on her head. That reads a hierarchical bias into the text.

- Do verses 7-8 advocate that man was made in God’s image but woman was not?

Some think that Paul was referring to a rabbinic teaching of his time. Nevertheless, Gen. 12:27, the source scripture for both us and Paul, says “So God created man in his own image ...male and female he created them.” We note that in verse 11, Paul says, “In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman.” Perhaps what has come before is tradition and Paul is writing in contrast.

- Does 1 Cor. 11:4-5 advocate women as well as men praying and prophesying in church meetings?

Yes, clearly both men and women were praying and prophesying in the church at Corinth. The issue was that they were doing it without wearing customary head coverings. We do not customarily wear head coverings, but a fair application of this passage for us today would be to say, when the women pray and prophesy in church, they should dress so as not to scandalize polite society and thus hinder the gospel message.

1 Corinthians 14:26-40

Continuing to address problems in the church at Corinth, Paul takes on disorder in the worship assembly, which was hindering the testimony of the church to unbelievers (1 Cor. 14:24-25).

In verse 26, Paul addresses “the brothers.” The TNIV says “brothers and sisters” to make the language inclusive. (It is customary in English to use the masculine when both genders are meant.) In introducing other issues (1 Cor. 11:33, 14:39, 15:1, 50, etc.), Paul also addresses “the brothers.” However, in verse 26, his instruction concerns “everyone” and says that when the church comes together, everyone should have a hymn, a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation done for the strengthening of the church. We conclude that both men and women brought manifestations of their spiritual gifts to share.

About the problem of disorder, Paul gives the same instruction to several groups—keep quiet (or “hold your peace” as defined by *Vine’s*¹). The ones told to keep quiet include those who were speaking in tongues when there was no interpreter present (verse 28), a prophet continuing to speak when another prophet had received a revelation (verse 30), and certain women (or alternately, wives [perhaps of the prophets who were speaking]; there is one word in Greek which is translated “women” or “wives.”) The NIV translators supply “be silent” in verse 34 for the same Greek word translated “keep quiet” in verse 28 and “should stop” in verse 30.

Since Paul, in 1 Cor. 11, allowed women to pray and prophesy in the church, we do not take the instruction to 1 Cor. 14 to be universal for all women for all time. Paul tells the women to make their inquiries to their husbands at home; we know that the disorderly women toward which this instruction was aimed were married, perhaps to the prophets who were speaking.

In verse 33, when Paul says, “As in all the congregations of the saints, women should (keep quiet) in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says,” he is describing the customs of the times. “The law” referred to is believed to be Gen. 3:16, “and he will rule over you.” We conclude that Christian women are counseled to behave in a culturally appropriate way. In a culture modeled after a dominant male/subordinate female pattern, women should submit in order not to hinder the witness of the Gospel.

There is no doubt that this passage was situational, but the principles can be applied in the church today. Those contributing to disorder in the church, especially disorder which is detrimental to the ability of the surrounding community to hear the Gospel, should be told to keep quiet and hold their peace.

¹*Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, MacDonald Publishing Company, McLean VA.

1 Timothy 2:8-15

Paul wrote to his young “son in the faith,” Timothy, whom he had assigned to Ephesus in order to oppose false teachers (1 Tim 1:2-3). In 1 Tim. 2, Paul addresses some issues which had arisen in the church which were detracting from God’s desire to bring all people to be saved and to the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim 2:1-4). Paul counsels “peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness (1 Tim. 2:2). Toward this end, he admonishes –

- the men to pray without angry conflict and disputing;
- the women to do good deeds and dress not extravagantly or indecently, but in a way which is appropriate in the culture for women who worship God;
- the women to learn, but in quietness and full submission (as was appropriate to the culture). “Learn” suggests that the women should be allowed access to religious education, a new privilege in the culture and so they needed to learn “in quietness and submission” so as to not hinder the reputation of the Gospel in the community.

In verse 12, Paul counsels quietness (NIV translates the word as “silence “ in this verse) for women who would teach. Paul says he follows the custom and does not allow a woman to have the role of rabbi with male disciples. (We do not believe this would prohibit a Christian woman from sharing a message with the church or from facilitating a Bible class. She should, of course, perform the task with the humility and servant heart required of any Christian leader.)

Verses 13-15 are among the most difficult passages in the New Testament. It may not be possible to settle on one clear meaning for this text. Neither should such a text alone be used to restrict the role of women in the church for all time. Questions which show the difficulty include –

1. For what purpose does Paul refer to Adam and Eve?
2. Are not both men and women saved only by the blood of Jesus? What is the meaning of being “saved through childbearing?”

About question #1, some see “an order of creation” argument in verse 13. They take the verse to say that Eve was created as a subordinate to Adam, being created after him. Rather we saw in Genesis that in the beginning Eve was made to be complementary to Adam, completing him and partnering with him to relieve his aloneness in a way that subordinate animals could not (Gen. 2:18-23). Surely verse 13 does not attribute superiority to Adam because he sinned deliberately, over Eve who was deceived and sinned. We take the reference to be a warning to women teachers not to take their responsibility lightly because consequences can be as drastic and far reaching as the sin of Eve.

Concerning question #2, Paul having brought up the shame of Eve, continues (in the most literal translation of the Greek): “but *she* (Eve, not the plural “women”, as the NIV has it), “will be saved through childbearing if *they* (the plural offspring) continue in faith, love and

holiness with propriety.” Perhaps the phrase “saved through childbearing” is a reference to Gen. 3:15, where God, at the Fall, said to the serpent, “I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.” So, perhaps this confusing passage in 1 Timothy 2 means: It was Eve who was deceived and became a sinner. But her reputation and the consequences of her sin will be redeemed through the bearing of the Christ child and the children who have followed, if they continue in faith.

1 Peter

In his first epistle, Peter develops the theme of submission as the lifestyle of a Christian. In 1 Pet. 2:9-25, Peter exhorts his readers to live out their calling as a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, people belonging to God. He calls believers to live such good lives that although they are criticized [and persecuted], their lives may bring glory to God in the midst of a pagan culture (verse 12). In verse 16 he tells them to live “as free¹, not having freedom as a cover of evil but as slaves of God.”

1 Pet. 2:13-17 calls believers to submit to ruling civil authorities (for Peter’s first readers that would be the brutal, pagan Romans). Peter says God’s purpose is to use his servants to silence foolish, ignorant men (verse 15). Servants of the Kingdom must submit to the King’s purposes. Peter calls believing slaves to submit to their masters, even to the ill treatment of godless masters, for the sake of their Christian witness, as they follow the example of Christ who suffered for us (verses 18-21). This admonition is not to be taken as an endorsement of the institution of slavery. Rather it speaks to the believer living in a culture which had slaves. In human society, slaves were the lowest strata, but they were accepted as Sons of God (Gal. 3:28) and made instruments of the salvation of their masters and witnesses of the humility of Christ himself to all. Consider also Phil. 2:5-11 which describes the mind of Christ. Eph. 6:5-9 and Col. 3:22-4:1 both exhort slaves to serve their Master by serving well their earthly masters, promising them a heavenly reward. These passages likewise admonish slave masters to be mindful that they are accountable to God for the treatment of their slaves. Historically, wherever the Gospel has gone, the Christian ethic has prevailed, and slavery has been abolished.

The teaching on submission continues into 1 Pet. 3:1-6. Peter calls wives to submit to God by submitting to their unbelieving husbands so they may be won to Christ by the testimony of their godly lives. Notice that there is no hint in Peter’s letter that women, by their nature, were meant to be subordinate to their husbands. In the culture of Peter’s day, men ruled over women in a social structure parallel to slavery. By submitting to their unbelieving husbands, these women were to partner with the Lord for the sake of the salvation of their husbands.

To believing husbands, Peter says, treat your wives with consideration, respecting their weaker position. In a culture where a hierarchical model for marriage is the custom, women are weaker in social power, like slaves are weaker; but Peter advocates a more egalitarian treatment of wives. Peter counsels believing husbands to recognize their wives as co-heirs of the grace of God. Peter warns that less considerate treatment of wives will hinder the prayers of a man before God.

¹ NIV in 1 Pet 2:16, says “as free men;” “men” is not in the Greek. Peter is teaching women as well as men about their freedom in Christ.

Application of this teaching for today does not enforce male dominance any more than the parallel teachings enforce slavery. Christianity works to teach society to value men and women equally as his children and as the instruments through which He does his work on earth.

Galatians 3:26-29

Paul, in this his earliest letter, affirms that human social distinctions are irrelevant in defining who are the “sons of God.” The sons of God and, therefore, the heirs of his blessings and of the promise made to Abraham, are *all* those who have put their faith in Christ Jesus, who were baptized into him, and who have been clothed with him. All those are included whether they are –

- Jews or Gentiles,
- slave or free,
- male or female, and
- all those are united as one in Christ.

The community of the Sons of God, the church, was a new creation, accomplished by Jesus’ death on the Cross and His resurrection from the grave. It was first formed on Pentecost and from the first manifest shared love and oneness, as reported in Acts 2:42-47. However, as one reads through the rest of Acts and the Epistles, we find a church that was not yet all that God intended.

With God the truth of the inclusiveness and the oneness of all His Sons on earth was sealed and revealed by the redeeming work of His Son from Heaven. However, the process of transforming those who were being saved into the full image of Christ is ongoing and involves continuous change. The Apostle Paul, in Ephesians 4:11-16 envisions a church where each member is prepared by God for works of service "so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work."

Let no one in our day diminish the privilege of any of God’s sons to be all God intends them to be in His church.

Ephesians 5:21-33

Ephesians is a letter from Paul to the church at Ephesus which does not address problems, but seeks to expand the understanding of the church concerning God's purposes and goals for the church.

Ephesians 5:21-33 is a section which includes instruction for wives and husbands drawing a parallel between the marriage relationship between husbands and wives and the relationship between Christ and the church. The section begins with the admonition: "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ," (Eph 5:21). At the very least "submit to one another" means a man and woman abandon the power struggle which has prevailed since the Fall in Eden and allow the lordship of Christ to be expressed in their relationship.

Typically, hierarchicalists interpret the teaching "for the husband is head of the wife" as ruler of the wife and egalitarians have sought other meanings for "head." We believe the text itself gives a clear model of headship. It says the husband is the head of the wife *as Christ is head of his body the church*. The head/body metaphor portrays a *union*, a mutually considerate working unit, more than a male dominant/female subordinate structure. Indeed, verse 31 invokes the Genesis passage which predates the Fall, "the two will become one flesh."

Paul says, in verses 28-29, that husbands should love and care for their wives as their own bodies, and, in verse 33, that wives should respect their husbands. This teaching for Christian marriages, when lived out, restores intimacy, removes selfish pride, and makes irrelevant the age old question, "Who's the boss?"

However, Paul says that his real emphasis is to teach about Christ and the church (verses 23-25, & 33). Of course, human gender is blended together in the Bride of Christ, which is the church for which Christ sacrificed himself. As the church submits to Christ, in a traditionally feminine role, Christ loves, washes, perfects, feeds, and cares for his church because he has chosen the church as his own body.

KEY CONCEPTS

As the study progressed, certain concepts and issues of interpretation were encountered many times and in different passages of scripture. Members of the group wrote essays on these five topics:

- Cultural Relativity
- For the Sake of the Gospel
- The Marriage Relationship
- Tradition in the Church
- Scripture Translation and Interpretation Issues

The DAG

Cultural Relativity

An important issue is cultural relativity, i.e. what in scripture is cultural and belongs in the first century, and what transcends culture and is a principle for all time – a principle that must be applied to genuinely comparable situations today. We found guidelines that make sense in this quest in *How To Read the Bible for All Its Worth*².

- One should first distinguish between the central core of the message of the Bible and what is dependent on or peripheral to it.
- One should be prepared to distinguish between what the New Testament itself sees as inherently moral and what is not. Paul's sin-lists never contain cultural items, only moral ones (sexual immorality, idolatry, drunkenness, thievery, greed, etc.).
- One must make note of items where the New Testament itself is consistent and where it reflects differences.
- One must distinguish between principle and specific application, i.e. we should do nothing to distract from the worship of God (principle), but wearing of a veil in our assembly (specific application) would certainly be a distraction.
- It's important to determine the cultural options open to a writer during the first century. He could not write about computers!
- One should be alert to less obvious cultural differences between the 1st and the 21st centuries.

Women were teaching, praying and prophesying in Acts 18:26, 21:9, and 1 Cor. 11:5, but in 1 Timothy 2:11-12 and 1 Cor. 14:34 the scripture says that women are to keep quiet. Based on the above principles of interpretation we would conclude:

- Women speaking or not in the assembly does not appear to be something that is core to the gospel message.
- Women speaking or not in the assembly never makes it to one of Paul's sin lists.
- The New Testament is not consistent in the teaching about women keeping silence in the assemblies.
- Women may have been showing disrespect to their husbands in their behavior during time of worship and were therefore told to refrain from that behavior.
- Would it have been an option during the 1st century to even consider a woman as a pastor in the church?
- There were few educational opportunities for women in the 1st century and yet there are equal opportunities in that area today.

² Fee, Gordon D., & Stuart, Douglas. (2003). *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (3rd Edition ed.). Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, pp. 80-86.

For the Sake of the Gospel

There were a number of passages where we saw the main idea was to observe cultural propriety so as to not scandalize those non-believers in the surrounding culture and thus turn them away from hearing the gospel. The examples which follow will make clear what we mean when we say the reason for advocating certain behaviors for the church was “for the sake of the gospel”, or so that the gospel may not be hindered, or so that the gospel would be heard by outsiders. Our worship and our daily lives are to reflect who He is and should never detract from the message of the gospel.

Paul, speaking of his right to support as an evangelist, says in 1 Cor. 9:12, “But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we **put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.**”

Paul says in 1 Cor. 9:19-23, “Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this **for the sake of the gospel**, that I may share in its blessings.”

1 Cor. 11 – The context for this chapter begins at the end of chapter 10. As Paul begins this section, he states in 10:31-33, “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God – even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, **so that they may be saved.**”

1 Cor. 14 – Paul sprinkles this kind of language throughout when he says,

- “Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers; prophecy, however, is for believers, not for unbelievers. So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and some who do not understand or some **unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind?** But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand comes in while everybody is prophesying, he will **be convinced by all that he is a sinner** and will be judged by all.. **he will fall down and worship God,**” (verses 22-25).
- “All of these must be done **for the strengthening of the church,**” (verse 26); “For God is not a God of disorder but of peace,” (verse 33).
- “Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way,” (verse 40).

1 Tim. 2 – Paul begins this section with an urgent request, “I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who **wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth,**” (verses 1-4). He tells women to dress appropriately, as women who profess to worship God (verses 9-10). Women are to submit in order not to hinder the witness of the gospel message.

Further in this passage Paul emphasizes that overseers must be above reproach and have a good reputation with outsiders (verses 2 and 7). He tells Timothy to watch his life and doctrine closely – **to save both himself and his hearers** (verses 15-16).

1 Pet. 2:12 – In the New Century Version this verse states, “People who do not believe are living all around you and might say that you are doing wrong. Live such good lives that they will see the good things you do and will give glory to God on the day when Christ comes again.” 1 Pet. 3 begins in the same way, “wives should yield to your husbands...” **All for the sake of the Gospel.**

The Marriage Relationship

Key to our understanding of Christ's relationship to the church is our understanding of the marriage relationship between men and women. According to the teaching of Paul in the New Testament, they are parallel relationships. The true expression of one is reflected in the other.

Paul compares the relationships in Eph. 5:21-33:

"Yield to obey each other because you respect Christ. Wives, yield to your husbands, as you do to the Lord, because the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the church. And he is the Savior of the body, which is the church. As the church yields to Christ, so you wives should yield to your husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it to make it belong to God. Christ used the word to make the church clean by washing it with water. He died so that he could give the church to himself like a bride in all her beauty. He died so that the church could be pure and without fault, with no evil or sin or any other wrong thing in it. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they love their own bodies. The man who loves his wife loves himself. No one ever hates his own body, but feeds and takes care of it. And that is what Christ does for the church, because we are parts of his body. The Scriptures say, 'So a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will become one body.' That secret is very important—I am talking about Christ and the church. But each one of you must love his wife as he loves himself, and a wife must respect her husband."

In the context of this letter, Paul is encouraging the church in Ephesus to protect the unity of the Body of Christ. He gives them guidelines for living as believers in a world of unbelievers for the purpose of leading others to Christ. The passage addresses relationships between wives and husbands; children and parents; and slaves and masters. It doesn't portray Christ as one who 'lords his authority' over the Church, but rather it reflects the absolute submission of his own will in every way for the purpose of bringing salvation to her (the Church) as his bride. Because of his great love for us, we, as members of his body, fully yield and submit to him. To question the Lord's desire for us or to engage in a battle for control leads only to our own detriment.

There are principles (both cultural and scriptural) for a healthy marriage relationship that do not necessarily apply to the relationships between men and women who are not married. However, Paul makes it clear the illustration of marriage is pertinent to the relationship between the body of believers and Christ.

Another translation of Eph. 5:21 reads *"submit to one another in reverence for Christ."* We are called to mutual submission in the body for the sake of unity in the same way a husband and wife are called to mutual submission for the sake of preserving the marriage relationship—all for the sake of the Gospel.

Tradition in the Church

"All Christians are at once beneficiaries and victims of tradition – beneficiaries, who receive nurturing truth and wisdom from God's faithfulness in past generations; victims, who now take for granted things that need to be questioned, thus treating as divine absolutes patterns of belief and behavior that should be seen as human, provisional, and relative. We are all beneficiaries of good, wise, and sound tradition, and victims of poor, unwise, and unsound traditions." J. I. Packer

In a discussion of roles for men and women in the church today, the influence of tradition is a key concept that must be considered. Tradition, in this instance, is being defined as “the passing down of elements of a culture from generation to generation, especially by oral communication; a set of customs and usages viewed as a coherent body of precedents influencing the present.”

Over time, even in the course of one generation, we can observe attitudes and behaviors in the church undergo transformation much in the same way we see them change in the world and social climate around us. We can also experience occasions when a particular doctrine or common practice in the church, upon close scrutiny of scripture, is revealed to have its basis grounded in tradition rather than sound scriptural teaching. Retrospect gives us clearer insight to see how long-standing traditions become outdated and give way to more relevant practices. In the course of this group’s study, we have considered ways that traditional practices have affected the three dynamic relationships referenced by Paul in Galatians 3:28: master and slave, Jew and Gentile, male and female.

In the New Testament, we see that social norms and traditions were significant in the development of the early church. Paul’s letters to the churches, in particular, reflect the cultural norm of the day. For instance, we can detect references to how the Christians gathered, how they dressed, how they greeted one another, etc.

Paul’s writings also provide a glimpse into how some applied practices of Jewish Christians, such as circumcision and refusing to eat meat sacrificed to idols, created conflict with their Gentile brethren. The Law of Moses had been fulfilled in Christ. Observance of the law was not necessary to the New Testament Christian. Certainly, observing Jewish practices was not pertinent to the Gentile Christian’s lifestyle. In fact, making an issue of these observances might have seemed little more than an attempt by Jewish believers to impose their traditions on their non-Jewish brothers.

As we observe how traditional roles for women have evolved in American society and culture, it is logical to accept that traditional roles of women in the modern church have been impacted as well. Lance Pape, editor of Gal328.org says “... gender justice is enjoying a lot of attention in our culture ... in many ways our enlightened democratic society is coming to grips with the reality that gender discrimination has led to all kinds of gross

injustice. As during the movements for abolition in the 19th [century] and civil rights in the 20th century, the world outside our church doors is rumbling once again with profound change. I am convinced that, once again, God is at work in such rumblings. I submit these rumblings are a third chance for us.”

Mr. Pape draws a parallel between the changing attitudes toward gender roles in today’s church with the great struggle for emancipation of slaves several generations ago. He suggests a hardness developed in the hearts of believers that defended slavery as a concept warranted in scripture. Their rigid thinking coupled with a desire to protect their own traditional lifestyle pitted them against God’s true design for mankind. For *God is no respecter of persons*.

A better parallel might even be the struggle women endured to gain the right to vote in the early 1900’s. “Until 1920 women were not allowed to vote in the United States because the general belief was they lacked sufficient intelligence and maturity to have a say in who governed them.” (John Ortberg, 6-30-99).

Many pivotal male leaders in the conservative movement of our church heritage fought against allowing women freedom to utilize the full complement of their gifts in church. Richard T. Hughes, in *Reviving the Ancient Faith* notes that “Churches of Christ [our primary heritage] long prized objective rationality and deemphasized the emotional component of faith and worship. Perhaps stereotypical beliefs that women were more emotional (and hence less rational) than men motivated the male leadership of the tradition to exclude them from positions of power.” (p. 381)

David Lipscomb, well-known for his leadership in the Stone-Campbell Movement, vehemently opposed expanded roles for women in the churches in the late 1800’s and said of congregations that allowed women too much latitude: “Such congregations permitted perversions of the service of God,” since a woman’s “strong emotional nature demands whatever strikes her fancy, whether authorized by the Lord or not.” In 1892 he launched a consistent and sustained attack on the Christian Woman’s Board of Missions which had formed to support women’s suffrage. He said, “Every man who encourages [the women’s board] works against God, the church, womanhood, the interest of the family, motherhood, and against true manhood itself.” Five years later, in 1897, David Lipscomb ended his fellowship with the Disciples of Christ.

Fifty years ago a fight for civil rights swept across America, with Christians leading on both sides of the issue, each with an interpretation of scripture to support their beliefs. A traditional way of life in America was changing! Surely today, it is abhorrent to think of children growing up in a society of extreme racism that was traditional thinking in the generations before us.

Although he was not an advocate of slavery, we understand from Paul’s epistles to the early church that slavery and prejudice were norms in the societal makeup of that time. Paul also

understood the cultural and traditional roles for men and women, much of which dictated the subservience of women. However, Paul wrote inspired words to all people, regardless of station in life, encouraging them to live together in unity and spread the Good News. Biblical history records the integral part the humble and disenfranchised believers of both genders played in spreading Christianity throughout the world.

There are other less significant ways we might observe how changing traditions impact the church. In less than a generation, the manner in which church buildings are designed and used has been completely altered. We have seen acceptable worship styles undergo radical transformation at Oak Hills Church in a few short years. Advances in education, communication, and technology have opened our eyes to how Christians respect and observe traditions and cultural practices around the world. Ordinary people encounter open doors to global missions. We experience and share in the world-wide community of believers as never before. Hopefully, we do so with little expectation that believers across the globe will adopt traditions and practices that are typical to our culture yet so different from their own.

Today's American society has moved beyond the traditions of slave ownership and racism. We have accepted the Lord's admonition to us through the words of Paul that there are no distinctions between slaves and masters nor Jews and Gentiles. Perhaps now is the time to bring open minds and hearts to the third relationship Paul addressed in Galatians 3:28 — there is neither male nor female.

Scripture Translation and Interpretation Issues

In the study of several scripture passages about women, we encountered inconsistencies in the way the English text was translated, where translators were apparently guided by the presuppositions of their own culture. We will present a few examples as evidence, but first, a few thoughts about the nature of scripture.

As a church with roots in the restoration movement we are blessed with open access to scripture in our own language, and we are expected to learn to read, understand and obey the Bible, with the help of the Holy Spirit and those gifted to teach. The Bible is considered God's Word, but spoken through human instruments. At times God spoke directly to prophets and they both preached and wrote down the verbatim message. However, much of God's inspired scripture was written down by human authors in their own unique literary style, molded by their own time and culture. Consequently, responsible exegesis involves understanding the human context such as customs of the culture, and requires careful attention to the text to determine the underlying purposes of God.

Errors are often made when we take out of context passages such as 1 Cor. 14:34 ("women should remain silent in the churches,") and 1 Tim. 2:12 ("I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent."). Sometimes teachers in the church take the "it-says-what-it-means-and-means-what-it-says" approach. To do so neglects the cultural context, the first century problem or situation, and the textual cues regarding God's purposes. This leads to a reading of the text from the framework of personal presuppositions and cultural biases, possibly without anyone even realizing it.

Adding to the impact of these kinds of mistakes is an unexamined view of scripture. Some think of the words of the Bible as if they were dictated by God, without the influence of human authors. Actually, the earliest manuscripts were written in Hebrew and Greek and relatively little of the text claims to be the direct quotations of God. Furthermore the Bible in English has undergone a process of translation from the original Hebrew and Greek. This was a human process carried out by persons who knew both the languages of the ancient manuscripts and the English language of today. Unlike the absolute value of numbers, words have a range of possible meaning. Context must be used to determine their precise meaning. Bible translators assume that the inspired message of the Bible is to be found in the underlying *meaning* of the Greek and Hebrew manuscripts. The objective of Bible translation is to re-express the meaning of the original Greek or Hebrew in the most natural English possible, not necessarily by generating literal word for word equivalents.

Since we have no surviving original manuscripts of Biblical text, the question arises, how much variation occurs in different ancient manuscripts? Which ancient text do we follow? Bible translator Greg Pruettt says, "Almost never does an exegetical question or anything of theological significance hinge on a textual variation in the ancient manuscripts. I consider it miraculous." In fact, Pruettt says, "Anything left unclear by God in the text of scripture, I believe, was done to give us freedom. The unclear areas in the text are not accidental—

they allow us to adapt how we obey the text to our own historical and cultural context.” At least two of the passages which have been used to restrict women’s participation in the church are clearly classifiable as “unclear.” The two would be 1 Cor. 11:2-16, about women’s head coverings and 1 Tim. 2:13-15, where Paul refers to the order of creation of Adam and Eve, the deception of Eve, and women being saved through childbearing. Passages which are unclear should not be used to decide church practice in preference to the clear passages. Obscure passages should be interpreted in light of clear ones and never the other way around.

The process of Bible translation leaves the text open to the influence of the translators’ own cultural presuppositions, which they may not even know they have. In 1 Cor. 14:26-40, Paul addresses the issue of disorderly behavior in the worship assemblies of the Corinthian church. Three different groups are counseled to “hold their peace” or “be quiet” for a while and let someone else speak. The three cases are 1) Those who speak in tongues should “be quiet” when there is no one present to interpret; 2) Anyone prophesying when another prophet receives a new message should “stop” and let the second prophet speak; and 3) Women (or “women prophets” or “wives of prophets;” both are alternate translations) who want to question their husbands, should be quiet in church and ask their questions at home. The Greek wording is the same for all three cases, but most English translations, including the NIV, which most of our Group uses, say, “women should remain silent in the churches.” Unfortunately, the translators chose to make the English text communicate an unequivocal command when the Greek text did not clearly mean that.

The English translators have the Apostle Paul saying in two different epistles (1 Cor. 14 and 1 Tim. 2) that women should “be silent.” This leaves the impression that this instruction is generally the common counsel for women in the church and obscures the fact that in the Greek, the words are not the same. Two different words are used and neither means what is usually meant by “silence.” As we have already mentioned, the Greek word in 1 Cor. 14 means “to hold one’s peace,” as in taking one’s turn in an orderly way. The word translated “silence” in 1 Tim. 2:12 means to have a quiet attitude. In fact, in the same chapter in verse 2, the same Greek word is found and there the NIV translates: “that we may live peaceful and *quiet* lives in all godliness...” There has been no small impact on Christian women by English translators choosing 10 verses later to have God’s word tell them to be silent instead of to be quiet. Thankfully, in the revision, Today’s New International Version (TNIV), 1 Tim. 2:12 reads, “I do not permit a woman to teach or to assume authority over a man; she must be quiet.”

In 1 Tim. 2:15, the NIV translates the Greek singular pronoun “she” to the plural “women,” making this infamously difficult passage say, “But women will be saved through childbearing...” If the Greek singular is preserved, a more reasonable interpretation is allowed to emerge than to suggest that women are saved by something other than the atoning sacrifice of Jesus. (See the Discussion of Scriptures section.) In difficult passages, translators need to do more interpreting of the original text, and in those cases it is unavoidable that their own presuppositions influence the choices they make.

Eph. 5:21 says, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." The NIV puts a section break following this verse, which separates the parts of one sentence into two different sections. Verse 22 says, "Wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord." The Greek in this verse has no verb. In such a construction, it is clear the verb from verse 21 applies. If the section division is removed, the impact is to make mutual submission of Christians to each other the context for saying that wives should submit to husbands. The TNIV has moved the offending section division to come before verse 21.

One who studies the scripture passages about women, must expect to cope with translation issues such as these.

DAG TEAM STATEMENTS

The Doctrinal Advisory Group members were told that the Coordinating Committee expected to receive a report of the group's collective conclusion and also a poll of the final position of each individual.

The following documents are the individual reports. Writing these caused each person in the DAG to draw a personal conclusion and articulate it. Sharing those individual statements brought about a great deal of mutual respect and appreciation.

The DAG

Cheryl Green – Personal Statement

Over the past several months as our Doctrine Advisory Group has studied the roles of men and women in the Church, I have been at times both challenged and confused. However, I have also learned much and I have treasured the experience of studying and praying with godly men and women in an environment where prejudice and personal agendas have intentionally been laid aside for the pursuit of truth. The Holy Spirit has blessed our time together with honest dialogue and examination of scripture.

I have always believed the Word of God to be a living document, transcending cultures and time to be relevant and active in my life today. We are most blessed to live in an historical setting where the written Word is readily available in many formats, and we enjoy the freedom to worship God as we choose. And while the world largely ignores God's Word, those who know the truth and the freedom it brings share a great responsibility to make it known. I believe that as a 'city on a hill,' Oak Hills has been called to do just that.

Since becoming part of Oak Hills Church 13 years ago, I have observed it to be a place where both men and women serve alongside each other in their areas of giftedness. As a woman, I have felt valued, honored, and encouraged by both genders to use my gifts as Paul instructed the New Testament Christians—for building up the body of Christ.

We have explored resource materials on gender roles in the Church written by scholarly men and women who are immersed in study of the ancient languages and cultures. Fully aware of my intellectual limitations in those areas, I have benefited from their counsel yet relied on the Holy Spirit to be my teacher; and God to give me wisdom and discernment.

For most of my life, I have adopted, though not in the strictest sense, the hierarchical complementarian view toward acceptable roles for men and women in the church. Although it didn't play out exactly that way in my own home as I observed my mother graciously take up the mantle of leadership for our family when necessity demanded it. As a young professional in the electronics industry in the 1970's, I often found my sensibilities challenged by male co-workers. Some merely tolerated the new personnel policies adopted to equalize opportunities and recognition for women in an arena that had long been their domain. However, male-dominated leadership was the accepted practice in the Church of Christ where I grew up and it was reinforced in my Christian college experience as well as in subsequent years of church teaching.

Many Bible studies in which I have participated as an adult have been led by women who believe and support a complementarian point of view. In fact, I have taught and encouraged women to practice these principles-- not because I felt it was the only biblically correct way-- but because I saw it as beneficial to most marriages and families in today's church culture. Since all believers, both men and women, are prone to struggle with our selfish wills just as the Apostle Paul testified, it seemed reasonable that principles for 'complementing' one another would nurture relationships, both in the church and in the

home. The complementary view typically affirms men in the roles of authority and leadership while affirming women in more supportive roles. Although recent decades have ushered a more egalitarian view of gender contributions into American society and many churches, we also know complementary principles can work well, especially when rooted in culture and tradition. But that is not to say the complementarian view can be supported in scripture as God's original design.

As a study group, we have collectively examined various biblical texts that address the creation of mankind, the role of women in Israel's history; Jesus' encounters with women; the marriage relationship; as well as how men and women are portrayed in the early church. The more I have looked at the arguments supporting the hierarchical complementarian view as God's intended design, the more they have appeared to be inconsistent and unsound. The arguments are based on the assumption that because Adam was created by God first, man is intended to be in authority over woman for all time. However, God assigned Adam and Eve equal partnership in ruling over the earth and its inhabitants (Gen. 1:27-28). It was subsequent to sin finding its way into their relationship with God and each other, that the ongoing struggle develops over authority, submission, and selfish will.

Other arguments favoring the complementarian view are based in the Apostle Paul's epistles to the early church. These occasional documents must be read carefully in their entire context if we are to understand the heart and intent of the writer. To excerpt phrases and passages from the context of Paul's letters to support a particular point of view is careless. His comments reflect the acceptable practice of the day regarding the status of men and women. Women did not have a public voice, slavery and racial prejudice were very much a part of their society, and the Jews maintained an attitude of religious superiority over new converts. In Gal. 3:28, Paul makes it clear that 'in Christ' there are no such distinctions. Implementing new found freedom in Christ was the goal for this burgeoning community of believers— but, no doubt, it caused some problems for the first century church!

Early in our group's exercise, I was convicted of an area of unbelief in my own heart regarding the issue of men and women in the church. Whether attributed to my own insecurity, fear, or lack of understanding, I have not truly believed that equality of genders as God designed could peacefully exist within the community of God. But I am now challenged to believe that Paul's desire for the church in Ephesus could also be true for us: *"that we would have the power to understand the greatness of Christ's love...and be filled with the fullness of God."*(Eph. 3:18-20). We're not perfect, but we are redeemed; living free from the law of sin and death.

While I find myself daring to dream of the blessings God might have in store for the community of believers at Oak Hills Church, I am also reminded of Paul's statement to the Corinthian church as he instructed them in the exercise of Christian freedom.

“We are allowed to do all things, but all things are not good for us to do. We are allowed to do all things, but not all things help others grow stronger. Do not look out only for yourselves. Look out for the good of others also.” (1 Cor. 10:23)

I don't know how OHC might be impacted if (or when) women are recognized in highly visible roles of leadership. However, Oak Hills has set a good example on how to exercise freedom and advance the kingdom. I believe a thorough teaching of God's design for authority and leadership would be helpful as we commit to honor God with our collective service to the Lord. With wisdom and discernment, I trust we will act on what is determined to be true in scripture as well as applicable for us. And in keeping with our tradition and heritage, I trust OHC will exercise patience and understanding for what our own church culture will accept in practice.

Respectfully submitted,
Cheryl Green

Rick Powell – Personal Statement

First, I want to thank Chuck Cunningham for his humble leadership as we went through this study together. Chuck did a masterful job of creating a safe place for us to study this sometimes volatile subject. Throughout this study I felt like I was on a see-saw/teeter totter as it relates to what is the biblical view of women's role in the church.

To keep me from being on this roller coaster, I decided the best approach for me would be 1) Pray fervently 2) Focus on understanding what God's original intent was for us as his children & 3) Remember that I should be reading the Bible as a story (with many more stories within that story) and not as a text book. By approaching the Bible as a story, this helped me to better "connect the dots" especially when it might appear there were contradictions or exceptions to what God intends for his people. Some ah-ha's for me: 1) The realization that when I approach God's word as a text book, it allowed, almost encouraged me to view scripture in my own tradition. 2) When I approach God's word as a textbook, it makes it easier for me to canonize those scriptures that support "my own tradition". 3) By approaching God's word as a text book, it made it very difficult to understand & work through the cultural expressions of that day.

In The Beginning – The Original Design & Fall – Genesis 1 - 3

- God created heaven & earth
- God created all humans in His image
- God created Adam & Eve as equals
- God created man & woman to be united as one
- God wants to be in community with us
- As a part of the "Fall" from God's original plan/relationship design, it became about control & power over each other and rebellion against God

Return To The Original Plan – 2 Corinthians 5:15 – 21; Galatians 3:28; Genesis 1:27

- Jesus came to Restore/Redeem us to God's original design for our relationship with Him and each other
- The Church is supposed to live out God's story of redemption

What Do We See Women Doing In The Bible?

- Miriam was a prophet – Exodus 15:20-21
- Deborah was a prophet and Israel's Judge – Judges 4 & 5
- When Micah spoke of Israel's deliverance, he mentions those who were sent to help – Moses, Aaron & Miriam – Micah 6:4
- Huldah was a prophet – 2 Kings 22:14-20
- Junia was outstanding among the Apostles – Romans 16:7
- Priscilla & Aquilla worked together sharing the gospel – Acts 18; Romans 16:3

- Phoebe was a deacon, Paul said she was worthy of honor among God's people & that they were to help her in whatever she needs – Romans 16:1-2
- Sons & daughters will prophesy – Acts 2:16-18

Should Women Be Silent.....etc....?

I am not going to address each of the “women should be silent” or “pecking order” scriptures, except to say that based on my study of these scriptures, and viewing them as stories within “The Story,” I believe these restrictions had to do with the culture and respectability within the culture at that time.

So Where Am I Now, After Going Through This Study?

I believe we must continually search for biblical truth! I believe that there is not a pecking order when it comes to men and women in the sight of God. I believe that humbleness & mutual submission to each other is biblical. I believe that women & men should be able to do anything for which they are gifted, trained, etc.... I believe we should consider the culture we live in, but not allow it to be an excuse for limiting women who have been gifted by God in various ministry areas.

Please accept this paper/explanation of my understanding, as from one who loves “The Living Word of God”.

Many Blessings,
Rick

Rod Chisholm – Personal Statement

I grew up in an idyllic setting in rural south Arkansas. My family and our friends were faithful Christians who considered ourselves to be “people of the book.” Bible knowledge was strong and it was common to hear “book, chapter, and verse” comments to support every religious view. My faith had a good solid base of strength in God’s word and its interpretation for my life.

But, we had an evil curse hanging over us in the 1950’s and 1960’s. Our churches were lily white when close to half our population was black. Not only were we lily white, but a black person was not allowed to be a part of the congregation. My grandfather was a part of firing a preacher because he had a bible study with an African American. As civil rights unrest slowly stirred passions in our world, I never heard one single comment on the Church’s responsibility. No one spoke of Jesus’ attitude towards race. Comments on racial equality were nonexistent in my religious world.

We certainly knew the verses to use against instrumental music. I could tell you the five steps to salvation with verses to support each step. It was no problem for me to show someone why the name “Churches of Christ” was correct and a name like “Baptist” or “Methodist” was incorrect. I could point out the verses. But, never did I memorize a verse to show that God does not look at the color of someone’s skin to determine their worth. We didn’t address that issue. It was simply our cultural view that an African American was inferior.

My family and friends were Christians. God was our father and Christ was our savior. We are saved through the precious shedding of Jesus’ blood. I don’t doubt the sincerity of my people, and I certainly don’t deny our salvation. But, we were wrong!

From a strictly cultural viewpoint, our racism was religiously ignored and considered “correct.” Phrases such as “that’s just not accepted here” were frequently used to support our racist culture.

The last time I visited my home congregation, about ten years ago, I noticed a few African Americans in attendance. Culture had changed and the Christian community now accepted what the civil rights movement had so painfully birthed.

“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ Jesus have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.” (Galatians 3:27-29)

I do not mention my racist upbringing to shock or to brag. It is a painful memory and one that I wish I could erase or somehow change. I wish my family and my church would have been at the forefront of preaching equality of race in Jesus Christ. I wish I would have

memorized Galatians 3:27-29 and used it to illustrate that God does not see barriers between people groups. But we didn't; I didn't. We endured the sin around us with blind eyes of cultural adaption.

I don't mean to offend and I certainly don't judge, but I fear that I see many of our churches and many Christians today, blinded once again by a cultural wall in our religious convictions, that women are somehow inferior Christians to men. I realize that few will brazenly state such a word as "inferior" in the discussion of women and their appropriate or permitted roles in church work. But, personally, I find the explanations that limit women in their Christianity to be a clear indication that women are not equal to men.

In the corporate studies of our doctrinal study group and in my personal study certain key passages rose to the surface. I imagine we each will use many of the same passages in our committee reports as we have placed great scrutiny on their interpretation for our life and for the good of our Christian community, especially our Church at Oak Hills.

I begin with the Genesis account of creation and see a paradise where man and woman have equality. "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) Also, "And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good." (Genesis 1:31)

I believe these verses demonstrate that God was pleased with his creation of man and woman. These verses do not portray any hint of inequality, but just the opposite, a communion of man and woman made in the image of God. This state of paradise is damaged by sin and what we commonly call the fall. As a consequence of sin, the world enters an evil phase and the relationship between man and woman changes in this world of sin. Concepts such as violence, pride, enmity, pain and superiority are introduced.

Jesus is the only answer to the world of sin that enveloped humanity after the fall. His sacrificial death brought life into a world of death. "We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life." (Romans 6:4) He provides freedom from sin and a marvelous grace from our fleshly nature. "But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life." (Titus 3:4-7) We receive the Holy Spirit and are set free. "For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death." (Romans 8:2) It is in Christ that the curse of the fall is redeemed. God's children are redeemed, both male and female. I, therefore, believe that the text declares equality between man and woman.

The epistles are the epicenter of most of the controversy in women's role of Church participation and governance. Chuck, in his main report and several in our study group have

done an excellent job of going through many of the debated texts. Rather than repeating their views, I would like to submit my opinion in two areas of critical importance in the interpretation of the epistles: Consistency and Restorationism.

The epistles, as their given name suggests, are letters to real churches. These congregations are depicted in both their glory and shame. They have commendable faith and they often exhibit destructive vice. Individual Christians are singled out for special recognition in both positive and negative notations. The letters represent authentic church life in the first century in regions throughout the Mediterranean and near east. As we reflect on these letters and their application for our modern church life, we must never lose sight of their original intent. They were directed to people and churches that lived in distinct locals with particular customs, rituals, and beliefs. We now have the noble and necessary task to determine what may be described as the eternal intent behind these first century documents.

For instance, it is imperative to grapple with the role of cultural diversity in the epistles. The churches of my youth in southern Arkansas agreed that this was an essential task. Culture was examined in the application of scriptural guidance for modern life. For instance, 1 Timothy 2:8-10 records the following, “I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling. Likewise also that women should adorn themselves in respectable apparel, with modesty and self-control, not with braided hair and gold or pearls or costly attire, but with what is proper for women who profess godliness—with good works.” It was readily agreed that men lifting up their hands for prayer was merely a first century physical position of prayer that was not a commandment, but merely a cultural example. Most all of the women in our congregations wore gold jewelry and modern hairstyles were very accepted, including “braided hair.” These too, were accepted as examples of first century lifestyle and not a literal commandment for modern Christians. But, somehow, what were mere cultural adaptations in hand positions of prayer or jewelry for women in verses eight and nine became a strict and eternal Biblical mandate in verses eleven and twelve: “Let a woman learn quietly with all submissiveness. I do not permit a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man; rather, she is to remain quiet.” I was taught that women were disallowed from corporate worship leadership or prominence in church government in accordance with the clear commandment given in these two verses. Consistency reared its difficult head in interpreting the cultural diversity of 1 Timothy 2:8-12.

Consistency in interpreting God’s word and especially the epistles is essential if we are to be honest with the text. Our study group recognized this and devoted much time in trying to be uniform in our interpretation and application of culture in the text.

A second area of importance for interpretation is what I will call “restorationism” (it is also known as “patternism”). While it is a worthy task to study the text in its first century milieu to discern meanings for the modern reader, our task becomes muddled when we attempt to restore an exact mandated pattern. Obviously, we can see an eternal pattern in matters

such as love, faith and obedience. But, is there such a clear mandate for items of worship style or church governance?

In 1 Timothy, chapter three and in Titus, Chapter one are found two lists that are commonly called “qualifications for elders.” I grew up hearing these qualifications presented as a pattern for all time. Our goal was to restore the New Testament church of the first century and this was the pattern for elders. Although, I have heard similar comments in every Church I have served, each interpreted the pattern differently. Growing up I was taught that according to Titus 1:6 “and his children are believers...” an elder had to have more than one child and they had to have been baptized. In St Louis, my church leadership taught that plurality of children was not an issue, but whether one child or many, they still had to have been baptized. At Oak Hills we also do not adhere to an issue over the plurality of children and we do not make an issue of baptism or a personal declaration of faith on the part of all children.

I could also relate how each church seemed to have differing views of the pattern involved with “husband of one wife,” “able to teach” and “not be a recent convert.” If there is an exact pattern to restore in these qualifications of elders, each Church has yet to locate the original.

I believe that these two lists are not meant to be an exact replica to be slavishly imitated, but a cultural listing of the type of person to pastor God’s flock. If, truly, it is an exact pattern, our churches have obviously failed in its discovery and application.

I suggest that the very fact that such a list of qualifications is so generic and relative in substance clearly indicates that it is not to be restored as a pattern, but discovered anew in each culture and era. Actually, I believe that is our task; not to restore the first century church, but to be the actual church of Christ in every culture and every era. This would mean that many issues such as church governance and worship practices are forever growing and evolving.

My understanding of God’s view of humanity; my belief in the importance of Consistency in interpreting the Biblical texts on women’s role in the church; along with my rejection of restoration or patternism necessitates that I affirm that women and men have equality in the Lord. I do not believe that church governance or public worship leadership are the exclusive realm of men for all time.

Respectfully submitted:
Rod Chisholm
12-8-08

David Lambert – Personal Statement

When I was invited to serve on this team to study the woman's role in the church, I had two immediate responses:

- (1) Why would you ask me? I'm no scholar!
- (2) Why are we talking about that subject?

In my world of corporate America I had not been involved in any gender issues in many years. And at Oak Hills I had not felt anything but respect for my own ministry. So really, it was a non-issue for me.

But finally, God placed it on my heart (after I argued and argued with Him) to accept the invitation. I am very glad that I did! I've learned so much, and have enjoyed studying with an incredible group whom I highly regard and respect. Following are some of the ideas I've come away with as a result.

The Fall seems to be the place where man and woman were "unequalized." Redemption brought through Jesus "equalizes" us. Not only did Jesus reach out to, lift up, accept, and treat women with respect, he did the same for children, Gentiles, lepers, "sinners", outcasts of all sorts. No one is to be held back, mistreated, or oppressed. Jesus' purpose was to redeem, make whole, bring about unity. While on earth, we as individuals as well as the church, are always in the sanctification process – we'll have to wait until heaven to be fully perfected.

There is precious little in the New Testament about worship liturgy, either what we are to do, how we are to do it, or who is to do what. We have a few examples of what was going on in various churches, but not a sanction from Jesus or the apostles. There is one thing that seems important in all cases: Christians should not do anything during worship that would hinder people from hearing the gospel message, whether it be disorderly conduct, treating each other unfairly, wearing inappropriate attire, or anything else. We submit to one another, we are culturally sensitive and appropriate, and treat one another with respect – SO THAT we will not hinder the gospel being heard by outsiders.

Our own inconsistent interpretation and behaviors may turn outsiders away as much as anything. We read one verse of scripture about head coverings and say that is cultural, then read another about women being silent and say that's a forever mandate. And what we do in one room of the building is deemed "wrong" in another room. Outsiders can leave scratching their heads in bewilderment.

Now it seems that our original task was to look at what roles women can participate in on Sunday morning (or Saturday night) in the worship center. However, we noted throughout our discussions that the New Testament was written during a time when the church met in homes, not in large sanctuaries. And unless we want to be inconsistent, what we say is ok in home groups (what the church was in the 1st century) cannot be different from what we

say is ok in the worship center on Sunday – unless by doing so we hinder the gospel being heard by outsiders.

Women were obviously actively involved in praying and prophesying during worship time in Bible days, so if we say women cannot participate in those things because of what other scriptures say, we would be indicating that scripture contradicts itself. I believe that the Bible is congruent with itself throughout. Therefore, I would have to go back to the nature of the Epistles and say that Paul was addressing specific problems in these writings. We need to interpret scriptures regarding the “silence” of women accordingly.

The Epistles are occasional documents, written to respond to specific situations, in a specific church, within a specific culture. We are living under a different set of circumstances and we should not use our 21st century, western culture lenses to read things back into the text. We must learn and act on the principles originally intended by the authors of scripture.

Most of us agree that men and women are equal in the kingdom, but some say that there are different roles for each to play within the public worship and leadership structure. However, there is no ruling over or difference between the genders in the eyes of God upon redemption through Jesus. Therefore, in my mind, it’s all or nothing. There’s no need to figure out who can do what or who should lead or who should be led. We are all one in Christ Jesus – we are redeemed, i.e. no longer under the curse.

As far as submission is concerned, I believe that I should submit to whoever is in the position of leadership, whether it be the elders leading the church, a teacher leading a class, a person taking charge of a mission trip, a LIFE group leader, etc. I should support, encourage, and follow. And when I take on the leadership role, I should do so with a servant heart, submitting to the needs, respecting and empowering each one that is following.

After we discover what we believe to be the ideal way to function as men and women in the church, there is always the next question. What does our culture dictate? And is the culture at the Crownridge campus the same as that on our satellite campuses? Whatever we choose, we must be sure that our actions do not keep outsiders from hearing the message of the gospel.

We are all uniquely gifted to join with our brothers and sisters in the church to worship and serve our God. Let us all use our gifts well and for the purpose of giving God the glory!

Dauida Lambert

Joy Pruett – Personal Statement

When we began, I had already read a lot of books on women and the church and for a long time I had tried to understand what the Bible passages say about women. I had studied, not just to know what the scripture meant, but also how to obey it. I had never before been able to resolve my confusion to the point where I was confident that my understanding was correct and I certainly could not explain it to anyone else. Studying the subject with the DAG provided a God-seeking community and a process of shared study which brought me to the point where I now have reasonable confidence that my understanding of the scripture passages about women is in harmony with God’s intention. For that I am very grateful.

Some personal observations follow.

- 1) Things which complicate our abilities to understand these scripture passages include our personal biases, even the biases of the English translators, our traditional hierarchical cultural and religious roots, and our traditional ways of interpreting scripture with little attention to the context. These intellectual habits and mindsets are all very difficult to overcome and changing these requires a lot of hard work.
- 2) Also, if we are going to make changes in the church, we must address the fears of our people—fears of changing things and losing the status and personal power which we do have, for both men and women—fears of being shamed. Changes must be carefully explained and teaching must be handled gently and prayerfully, not as a conflict, debate, or battle. Issues of gender reach to the innermost heart of persons and hearts are fragile.
- 3) I believe that the scriptures equip women to function in either a hierarchical or an egalitarian setting and we see women serving the Body effectively, in spite of restrictions. I agree with Chuck that our surrounding culture and especially our church culture is more hierarchal than egalitarian. However, to decide to maintain the status quo in the church and forego change and growth is temptation, not wisdom.
- 4) I pray that we can have more teaching for both men and women about how to live and function in an egalitarian relationship. I believe we need more teaching on “gender appreciation.” We cannot afford to fail to eat whatever fruit of the Tree of Life is made available to us.
- 5) I do not like the term “hierarchical complementarianism.” I do not believe that the idea of complementary gifts, abilities, and roles is necessarily hierarchical. Understanding this may be the beginning of gender appreciation.
- 6) I do not like to hear anyone say that the issue of women’s role in the church is not a matter of salvation and therefore is a matter of low priority. This suggests that the

church has evaluated the issue of just treatment of women and decided it is not important. Indeed by neglecting to engage the issue, we have made a statement which could drive away lost women.

- 7) When I look at the organizational chart of the church, I think that something is not Biblical. Women are members of the Body, but they have no pathway to participate in making decisions which effect the whole church. Even when I think about how the issue is stated: "Women's Role in the Church," I think there are non-Biblical assumptions underlying the statement of the issue. It suggests that the church is men and the men have the option of deciding what role the women can have in it. We know, don't we that God adds the saved, both men and women to the church and He chooses to live through the church, calling it his body? Whatever service a believing man or woman gives, they do as members of Christ's Body.
- 8) I think it would be a mistake to conclude simply that women can be elders, while we continue to maintain a hierarchical pattern of organization. We need to continue the work already begun to redesign what we mean by the role of elders. I think it is wrong for male or female elders to domineer in an authoritarian way over the flock. New wine needs new wineskins or else the traditions of the past become a stronghold.
- 9) I wonder what the loss of the full expression of the spiritual gifts of women has been for the church?
- 10) When I get to Heaven, will it matter that I am a woman?

Mark Tidwell - Personal Statement

Given the assignment to study the role of women in the church has been both rewarding and challenging. The opportunity to approach the scriptures unencumbered by preconceived outcomes or underlying motives was invigorating. Closely interacting over a period of many months with the other members of the Doctrinal Advisory Group (DAG) was a true blessing. I'm indebted to my teammates for the encouragement to remain intellectually honest throughout the process. The manner in which they poured their hearts into this task was inspiring.

Chuck Cunningham did a superb job summarizing the DAG's body of work in his Chairman's Report. I agree with the majority of his conclusions contained in section IV of the report as well as his recommended next steps.

At the start of this assignment I would not have defined myself as a Hierarchical Complementarian; however, using the terms our group adopted that certainly describes where I stood. I firmly believed then as well as now that scripture teaches men and women must show mutual deference toward each other (Eph. 5:21-33). I also believed God sovereignly established a hierarchal order where men were placed over women from the beginning of time. After closely studying Genesis chapters 2-3, I am no longer convinced this hierarchal order started with the creation of Adam and Eve. Instead it was one of the consequences of the fall (Gen. 3:16). Where I formerly understood Paul's words in 1 Cor. 11:3-16 as clear hierarchal order, I now believe a better interpretation focuses on a healthy interdependence between the sexes. This interdependence is applicable in both society at large as well as the church.

Passages such as Galatians 3:28 with its emphasis on equality among God's children, and Paul's instruction to husbands in Ephesians 5, began to sort themselves out in my mind where a more coherent, biblically sound theology of the sexes could emerge. I now see where a strict hierarchy among the genders can actually become a barrier between the created and their creator.

Although I deeply respect and acknowledge those who take a different view, I no longer see the New Testament establishing a doctrine which would prohibit either gender from exercising their God given gifts no matter the location or position, whether in a corporate worship center or a small group circle.

In regards to women serving as Elders, I believe a credible case can be made for both sides. If as stated above, I no longer believe a strict order of creation hierarchy exists, then the gender specific language used in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 referring to the appointment of elders could be nothing more than "reflective of the culture in which the NT events were played out." (Osburn, Women in the Church, pg 266)

Since I do not find clear language in the NT stating women cannot serve in leadership roles I am intellectually drawn to believe women can serve as elders. However, I confess I am not yet at peace with that position and cannot pin point the reason. Perhaps it is entirely my own cultural prejudice, but whatever the cause I must continue to wrestle with this question.

While this is my current understanding of the biblical evidence, I strongly recommend the Oak Hills Church leadership be sensitive to its own culture and current membership. No significant changes should occur until the full leadership team has studied this body of evidence delivered by the Doctrinal Advisory Group as well as extensive teaching from the pulpit.

Our ultimate goal must be to move toward a position that permits both genders to become all God intended for them from the beginning of time.

Mark Tidwell, Dec 08

Richard Smith – Personal Statement

I enjoyed the study of Men and Women in the Church. We were fortunate to be "led" in our study by a couple of great Bible scholars -- Chuck Cunningham and Joy Pruett. Of course we all were greatly sorrowed when Chuck passed away. He had come to the end of most of his study and we had the results of that in hand as we completed this report. I know that Chuck is still watching our efforts and hope that, with the increased vision he now has of God's plans, he concurs with what we have written and are recommending.

The other members of this team were also a delight to work with. Davida Lambert kept all of our administration straight and Cheryl Green, Rod Chisholm, Rick Powell and Mark Tidwell also were major contributors to the research efforts.

As we started this study, I was in the "Hierarchical Complementarianism" viewpoint as summarized by Chuck in Appendix 1 of his report. I should note that I was raised in the "Patriarchalism" belief which was that of the conservative Church of Christ of my youth. It also, in many ways reflected the culture of my youth. The study we have just completed has moved me to the "Evangelical Feminism" belief.

The reason for this change is fairly obvious when you read Chuck's report and the Discussion of Scriptures. As we learned so well from the study we have just completed of "The Story," God has a different plan than Man. In the Garden of Eden when Man and Woman walked with God, it is now clear to me that they were "one flesh" and there was no distinction between them. This all changed with the "Fall of Man."

Jesus, in his walk here on earth, clearly treated women differently and more accepting than the traditional Jewish culture allowed.

There are many places in Paul's epistles where we have taken the admonitions about women to heart, but we have been selective in these and putting things like the dress requirements and "silence" admonition as only commandments of "culture." But we have held closely the restrictions for women to perform duties such as preaching, teaching men and women, and serving as Elders and have not noted that the same "cultural" forces underlie these teachings. In my mind after this study, the admonition that is general and has the most bearing on our study is found in Galatians 3: 26-28, *"You are all Sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."*

This verse leads me to the position that interpreting the Bible in context removes all barriers to full participation in Church administration and preaching.

This is reinforced as I have seen the benefit of women in our recent Elders and Wives meetings on the Plans for the next year. These were the best meetings we have had because of the strong participation and input of our wives.

All of this is not to say that we should not still respect our culture so that our practices and policies do not drive people away from the Church.

So this brings us to another question of what is our "culture." Nationally, our culture obviously respects the role of women as equal to men. This was most visible in the last year when there was a viable female Presidential primary candidate for President on one ticket and a female candidate for Vice President on the other ticket.

But "culture" for Oak Hills Church is more difficult to define. I think that we would find several different "cultures" at OHC -- Saturday vs. Sunday, Sunday 8:30 vs. 10 and 11:30; Journey Fellowship; Fiesta Fellowship and possibly others. Our current practices of the roles of women in our worship services reflect these cultures. However, "culture" can be changed with teaching and directed study and the adoption of this report will require that effort.

As the Eldership considers what to do with this report, I hope that they take the time to study it and PRAY, PRAY, PRAY!

Again, I want to complement all of the people who gave so much time to meeting, discussing, research and study on this topic. In particular, the efforts of our dear Brother Chuck Cunningham were appreciated.

Richard Smith

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman's Report is an important part of the DAG study. It is the only source of some of the information engaged by the Group, but it includes a large amount of material that the Chairman consulted in his own study which was never discussed by the entire DAG.

Near the end of the DAG's study of each of the targeted scripture passages, Chuck put the DAG meetings on hold, took a sabbatical, and studied on his own. During that time, he produced this 50 page Chairman's Report, which he presented to the Group when the meetings resumed. He invited feedback, discussion, and edits, which the group gave, but the report remained the Chairman's Report, not the DAG report.

Furthermore, Chuck recognized that he was the only one in the Group who held his position that women are forbidden to be elders in the church by the passage in 1 Tim. 3:2 (NIV) which says that elders must be "the husband of but one wife". He invited the writing of a "majority opinion". That was done and it follows the Chairman's Report as "The Addendum to the Chairman's Report."

The one part of the task remaining to be done was to write the summary of findings and the conclusion of the study. Before that could be done, Chuck Cunningham became ill and eventually passed away on June 2, 2009.

The DAG

The Study of the Role of Women in the Church
Doctrinal Advisory Group of Oak Hills Church
Chairman's Report
by Chuck Cunningham

The chairman of the Doctrinal Advisory Group, Chuck Cunningham, passed away on June 2, 2009.

Near the end of our group's study through the list of scriptures identified as essential to the subject, Chuck took a sabbatical from the group process to do some study on his own.

What follows is his personal document written at the end of that sabbatical. Some of this material was a result of the DAG's study; some of it was a result of Chuck's individual study, not discussed by the DAG. It is not the desire of the DAG to alter his report posthumously.

Having finished his report, he invited the writing of the Addendum which follows the Report. Once the Addendum was initially drafted he asked for revisions. These requested revisions were made and the document was accepted by him.

By the end of our study and meetings which were spread over a two-year period, the Doctrinal Advisory Group agreed unanimously to the conclusions reached. These are detailed in the Conclusion.

Table of Contents of the Chairman's Report

Preface	Page 56
Introduction	Page 58
Assessment of Current Practices of Oak Hills Church	Page 59
Two Basic Views: Hierarchical and Egalitarian	Page 61
What Does the Bible Say?	Page 63
Study notes of scripture and of research of historical sources on status of women in Old Testament and New Testament times.	
Where Should We Go and How Shall We Get There?	Page 81
Chairman's Conclusions about what is permitted and not permitted for women to do in the church, and discussion about managing change in the church.	
Appendix 1-7	Page 84
Various articles collected and researched by Chairman.	

Chairman's Report

A Study of the Role of Women in the Church

Preface

If you had polled the members of the Doctrinal Advisory Group (DAG) about the goal of our group, some of us might have said that our goal was: discover, describe and be ready to defend an air-tight position regarding women's roles in the Oak Hills church, based on the Scriptures. Our conclusion now—*such a position probably does not exist*.

- Although we have people in the DAG who are very knowledgeable regarding the Scriptures³, I don't think any of us would describe ourselves as "Bible scholars" in the technical sense of the phrase.
- However, even if we had been blessed with such scholars in our Group, it would not necessarily have placed us in an advantageous position because the *best* Bible scholars are *divided in their opinions regarding this topic*⁴.
- So, we concluded the best we could hope to accomplish was to share our observations and conclusions derived from prayers for the guidance of the Spirit, personal study (Bible and the opinions of some of the scholars), group Bible study and dialogue committed to openness and fairness.

Sharon early on asked me, "Do you think your group is unbiased?" My answer was, "No, we are not." I said that because I think, in reality there is no such thing as an unbiased group (unless everyone knows absolutely nothing about the topic and is totally disinterested—certainly not the case regarding this topic!) Everyone has presuppositions regarding any topic about which they have enough knowledge to have an opinion. However, by open and frank group dialogue we have attempted to help each other keep our individual presuppositions from crystallizing into prejudices in this paper—never easy, seldom painless, and ultimately very rewarding...and hopefully, something that will prove useful to the leadership of the Oak Hills church as they ponder where the Lord might be leading us.

By the time you read this you will have been involved for some time in a study of the Bible Story—the story of God, who is a community, broadening the community via the Creation of man and woman who lived in perfect community with Him in the Garden. Unfortunately, Adam and Eve chose a different vision for their life than God's vision and, as a result, community with God and with each other was obliterated, the Curse was pronounced and

³ I had the privilege of collaborating on this project with the Doctrinal Advisory Group consisting of Cheryl Green, Davida Lambert, Joy Pruett, Mark Tidwell, Richard Smith, Rick Powell and Rod Chisholm (with contributions from Charles Prince and Steve Dye.)

⁴ For example, Gordon Fee, Professor of New Testament Studies, Regent College and Douglas Moo, Professor of New Testament, Wheaton College Graduate School are evangelical scholars who serve on the NIV Committee on Bible Translation. Had we been blessed to have these men teach our group, they would have given convincing proof of their positions on this topic—positions which do not agree with each other.

the Garden was lost. The mutuality of paradise was replaced with the pronouncement, “He will rule over you.”

Jesus came and paid the price to redeem us from the Curse, to get us back into community with Him and each other. This community is described as a place where “There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”⁵ It is our prayer that through this discussion we might identify ways in which we can show our full commitment to community in every way our Lord intended as we take the Story of Jesus to San Antonio, South Texas and beyond.

Chuck Cunningham

⁵ Galatians 3:28 NIV

Introduction

Our assignment was to study the Scriptures as they pertain to the role of women in the Oak Hills church. The purpose of our assignment was to provide input to the Oak Hills leadership as to whether, in our opinion, the Scriptures reveal that change in our current understanding and practice is indicated.

It might be helpful to your understanding of the scope of our assignment if we first point out what our assignment was NOT:

- Our assignment was not to engage in a discussion of women’s political rights. Neither is it a discussion of social justice for women, as important as these topics are.
- Nor was it our assignment to engage a discussion of the roles of men and women in marriage and in a home, even though the Scriptures have much to say in this regard.
- Furthermore, ours was not an assignment to come up with something “different” or “contemporary” or “cutting-edge” for Oak Hills.

Our assignment could be summarized in the question “Are we allowing women of Oak Hills to participate in all the roles for which God has gifted them consistent with what He expects and allows as revealed in His word?” The flip-side to this question is another, more pointed question: “Do we think that God bars anyone in Oak Hills from any area of leadership or ministry strictly on the basis of gender?” At first glance these questions as framed may seem to indicate a bias or an intention to prejudice. That is not our intent. It is our intent, however, to look at this question head on, to speak plainly and not finesse anything away. We believe that Oak Hills is a safe place to do this because we are a fellowship of Bible-believing people who are willing to take a stand on the Scriptures *when it is shown that God has clearly spoken*. We are also a group who gives liberty in matters of opinion.

Our discussion will cover the following related topics:

- Where Are We Now? (The current practice of the Oak Hills church regarding the role of women);
- What Are the Opinions of the Scholars?
- What Does the Bible Say? (A presentation of our understanding of pertinent Scriptures), and;
- Where Should We Go and How Shall We Get There? (How the Lord may be calling us to change at Oak Hills).

Assessment of Current Practices of Oak Hills Church

Where Are We Now?

We will start our discussion with an assessment regarding Oak Hills current practice at all sites with respect to the roles of women. What do we allow and what do we restrict, based on our current interpretation of the relevant Bible verses? Currently...

- I) Oak Hills women lead and serve in roles **acceptable in most conservative evangelical churches**, such as:
 - a) Ministry and teaching for women and children
 - b) Greeters
 - c) Acts of service other than any mentioned in ii. and iii., below.

- II) Oak Hills women lead and serve in some roles **not always acceptable in some conservative evangelical churches**, such as:
 - a) Teaching adult co-ed Bible classes
 - b) Leading co-ed groups as Ministry Leaders (deacons) other than ministries for children, women and pastoral care.
 - c) Leading and teaching co-ed Life Groups and Discovery Groups
 - d) Leading prayer in any venue except in the worship center
 - e) Leading as the “officiant” at baptisms in informal settings (acceptable but infrequent)
 - f) Worship leaders in the worship center
 - g) Serving communion elements in the 10:00 am and 11:30 am services

- III) Oak Hills women are **currently barred** from leading and serving in the following roles:
 - a) Preaching and teaching in the worship centers
 - b) Leading public prayers in the worship centers
 - c) Serving communion elements in 8:30 am Sunday service in the worship center.
 - d) Leading as the “officiant” at baptisms in corporate worship center (and river baptism “events”?)
 - e) Serving as an elder

- IV) What are the reasons for the current practice?
 - a) **Perceived Biblical Support**—current or past interpretations and applications:

Current interpretation of I Corinthians 14:34-35 (“*women should remain silent in the churches*”) has led to application that bars women from preaching or leading in prayer co-ed corporate worship assembly. It has also led to an application that allows these things outside the worship center (classrooms, Life Groups, etc).

Current interpretation of I Timothy 2:12 (*“I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man”*) has led to application that bars women from preaching in the worship center or serving as elders. However, this prohibition has not been construed to prohibit Christian women from being managers of men in the secular workforce.

Current interpretation of I Timothy 3:2 (*“an overseer must be...the husband of but one wife”*) (see also Titus 1:6) has led to application that bars women from serving as elders.

b) Cultural Support

Most of the members at Oak Hills come from religious backgrounds where preaching and leadership of churches by men has been the norm for decades.

Members that disagree with the current practice have not been extremely vocal or divisive, choosing the greater good of the body of Christ while respectfully voicing concerns.

We have no way of gauging how many people, if any, have chosen not to join Oak Hills or have left Oak Hills in search of a church that is more inclusive of women in preaching and leadership. While Oak Hills seeks to be a “home for every heart,” we cannot be all things to all people at the same time and place. But we can determine to follow where the Lord leads us and then, wholeheartedly, do what seems “good to the Holy Spirit and us.”⁶

⁶ Acts 15:28 NIV

Two Basic Views: Hierarchical and Egalitarian

What Are the Opinions of the Scholars?

We would like to apologize in advance for a number of technical terms we are about to introduce in our discussion. We include them now so should you wish to do any further research you will have the terms necessary to conduct your search. A chart showing the major viewpoints and some of their basic tenets can be found in Appendix 1.

The purpose of introducing and explaining these terms is not to label people or divide people into groups a la Corinth, but rather to understand and evaluate the views.

There are two basic views of the relationship between men and women: **hierarchicalism** and **egalitarianism**. These views are defined as follows:

Hierarchical: Classified or arranged according to various criteria into successive ranks or grades. Hierarchicalist would teach that in God's design He created men to rank above women, and for that reason, women should not lead men. Hierarchical complementarians would view women as full participants in church and civic life, with the exception of church administration and preaching.

Egalitarian: characterized by belief in the equality of all people, esp. in political, economic, or social life. Evangelical egalitarians would teach that men were not initially created to lead women, but because of the fall and subsequent Curse, man was to rule over woman until mankind was redeemed from the Curse through the sacrifice of Christ. Therefore, today, men and women can both lead.

We will further subdivide these views into what we would style "extreme" and "moderate" stances within the two basic viewpoints. As you will observe, the extreme viewpoints seem to be reactionary solutions provided by the cultural agendas of their proponents. Most of the people of the Oak Hills church are probably quite comfortable in the moderate viewpoints and all of the recommendations that the Doctrinal Advisory Group will be making fall in the category of "moderate." (For that reason our discussion of the extreme approaches are relegated to Appendix 2)

The following is a brief definition of the Moderate Approaches:

Evangelical Feminism (Egalitarian): the belief that the Scriptures interpreted *in most cultures* would allow women to participate in any and all leadership or service roles in the church for which they are qualified and gifted. When we say "in most cultures" we are speaking of the countries (such as western democracies, many communist countries, and others where women are not restricted in any way by gender and where a woman could lead men in politics and business without scandalizing the culture.) Another way of describing Evangelical Feminism is *Unlimited Inclusion*.

Hierarchical Complementarianism: The belief that the Scriptures interpreted *in all cultures* would bar certain leadership or service roles to women regardless of apparent qualifications or gifts due to the belief that God ordained that men lead women from the very beginning, even before the Curse. Another way of describing Hierarchical Complementarianism is *Limited Exclusion*.

For your further study we have included a chart showing the DAG's reading assignments as well as the viewpoint of the authors. (See Appendix 3) We were careful to pick conservative, evangelical authors who believe the Bible is the word of God and is authoritative for belief and practice. As you can see, the scholars are men and women. Both men and women support the "Unlimited Inclusion" viewpoint. And both men and women support the "Limited Exclusion" viewpoint. While the scholars do much to inform us regarding the crucial concepts and pertinent Scripture, they do not agree-- therefore no one scholar can be looked to for a definitive answer. (However, one scholar that is particularly informative, fair and balanced in his presentation and very interesting is Carroll Osburn. We have listened to tapes of his presentations at the Pepperdine Lectures when he held to a "Limited Exclusion" viewpoint and have read his book where he now espouses an "Unlimited Inclusion" viewpoint.)

As we look at what the Bible says in the next section, we will be working within the confines of the moderate approaches because we believe these approaches most fairly and accurately handle the biblical texts.

What Does the Bible Say?

Are roles of leadership and service restricted by gender per the Scriptures?

How should the relevant Biblical passages currently be applied at Oak Hills?

The following are the Scriptures our Group took under consideration:

Genesis 1-3

Genesis 1-2—God’s vision is to be in community with us.

- God, who is a community, has a vision to extend community to us.”
- “So, he creates the heavens and the earth. On the final day of creation, he creates us in his image as a community (Gen. 1:27).”
- God is in fellowship with Adam and Eve in the garden (Gen. 3:8).”
- Genesis 2 concludes the story of the creation of woman with the statement that because of the creation of male and female, a man leaves his parents and bonds to the woman and the two become one flesh. Union of male and female was God’s purpose in marriage. [*According to Charles Prince, The community in the Trinity is the pattern for the community in marriage.*] The relationship, as God created man and woman, was not that of master and subordinate helper. The relationship was a union between two equal and complementary partners, different from each other in order to bring special advantages to the union. The man and woman lived together in intimate openness, ‘naked and not ashamed.’ [*According to Charles Prince, here nakedness also connotes vulnerability, i.e. “I do not close you out of me.”*]

Genesis 3—The first people have a different vision that ruins God’s vision.”

“Adam and Eve chose a different vision than God. (Gen 3)”

Eve was deceived by Satan and led to the belief that to eat “the fruit to gain godlike wisdom, to live with themselves at the center of their control, and ...to become their own masters” was of greater value than community with God.

Adam, realizing the consequence of Eve’s choice, “made a choice of which relationship he would put first [Charles Prince]”...and chose his relationship with Eve over his relationship with God.

“This introduces sin into the nature of the human race that is passed on to the offspring. (Gen. 4)”

“This sin nature inclines our heart toward evil. Evil is primarily expressed in living for our individual needs and wants. It causes us to attack and withdraw from people and

God. It separates us from the community of God and strains our community with each other. (Gen. 6:5)

“The immediate consequences of that decision were separation and shame between man and woman.” They were no longer one in community in a way that modeled God in community.

“Among the consequences of their transgression was for the woman, pain in childbearing and a desire for her husband who would rule over her...Man’s rule over woman, part of the curse, came as a result of the Fall, rather than being the created state.” As we shall see, the curse had ramifications beyond marriage.

Status of women in the nation of Israel

Ramifications of The Curse —the Sign of the covenant was between God and man-- and for men only.

- The Lord appeared to Abraham and promised him, "I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers."⁷
- The Lord then commanded Abraham, "As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every **male** among you shall be circumcised. You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the **sign of the covenant** between me and you."⁸
- The Lord did not direct Abraham, Moses, David or any subsequent Israelite to instruct the women regarding a sign of the covenant for them *because there was not one.*

The Curse codified—(and constrained)--Several of the laws God gave the Israelites imply an inferior status for Israelite women (see Appendix 4). It should be noted that Moses said that the Laws that God had given Israel were so wise and good that the nations, upon hearing them would proclaim, "*Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people...And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?*"⁹ Keeping that in mind, it causes you to wonder:

- how much worse the effects of the Curse would have been in Israel without these laws and,
- how bad the effects of the Curse were in the pagan countries.

Status of Jewish women in the first century

⁷ Genesis 17:2 NIV

⁸ Genesis 17: 9-12 NIV

⁹ Deuteronomy 4:5-8 NIV

“...they were definitely not considered equals with men... At age five, boys started going to school while girls were prohibited from a formal education. Their purpose was to serve their household with the performance of chores and housework...Women were not of equal stature in the spiritual community either. They were prohibited from Torah study all together ... However they were allowed to read the assigned scriptures on the Sabbath as God commanded, but were not allowed to do so in public. Suzanne Stone shares, “...there are more than a few rabbinic statements alluding to women’s frivolity and lack of seriousness, disqualifying them from the discipline of legal study”...They were, however, allowed to serve as a sohet (kosher butcher) and allowed to form or participate in a minyan (prayer group). Other than this, they were kept apart in the normal Jewish spiritual proceedings. The most obvious separation is that the women were segregated in the temple and synagogues on the Sabbath, not being allowed to enter in to the same area as the men.”¹⁰

During this period women were not allowed to testify in court trials. They could not go out in public, or talk to men. When outside their homes they were doubly veiled. They were considered “second-class Jews, excluded from the worship and teaching of God, with status scarcely above that of slaves.”¹¹

Jesus and women

In many ways we find Jesus observing Jewish cultural traditions and upholding obedience to the Mosaic law. However, in several areas he parted ways with the teachings of the Pharisees: observance and significance of the Sabbath, cleansing customs, fasting...and women.

Some of the areas in which Jesus differed from the Pharisees regarding women were:

- He taught female students, Luke 10:38-42
- He called a woman a “daughter of Abraham,” Luke 13:16; (Note: this is the first record we have of any woman being so named...and honored.)
- He accepted women as disciples, Luke 8:1-3.
- He appeared first to women after his resurrection, Matthew 28:1, 9
- He encouraged the weeping women as he carried his cross, Luke 23:27-29.
- He repeatedly expressed concern for widows, Luke 20:46-47.
- He ignored ritual impurity laws, Mark 5:25-34.
- He talked with Gentile women, John 4:7-10
- He changed the male-favored doctrine of divorce, Mark 10:11-12

¹⁰ Dilger, Barrett C., Women In First Century Culture (Online).
(<http://home.socal.rr.com/pitsehspage/images/Women%20in%20First%20Century%20Jewish%20Culture.pdf>)

¹¹ B.M. Metzger & M.D. Coogan, *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, Oxford University Press, New York, NY, (1993), P. 806-818.

- He commissioned a woman to tell the disciples the news of his resurrection, Matthew 28:5-7.

Women and Pentecost--Acts 2:14-18, 21

*14 Then Peter stood up with the Eleven, raised his voice and addressed the crowd: "Fellow Jews and all of you who live in Jerusalem, let me explain this to you; listen carefully to what I say. 15 These men are not drunk, as you suppose. It's only nine in the morning! 16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 17 "'In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on **all** people. Your **sons and daughters** will **prophesy**, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. 18 Even on my servants, **both men and women**, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will **prophesy**...and **everyone** who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. NIV*

Don't miss the significance of this passage! Contrast it with what we have read about women in the Old Testament. The Spirit for men **and women**! The Spirit gifting men **and women**! Sons and **daughters** prophesying. And the sign of the covenant (baptism, cf. Colossians 2:11,12) available to **all**!

A brief word regarding those who prophesy (prophets) is in order here. Prophecy clearly had elements of foretelling, instruction, warning and pronouncement. The prophet spoke as the Spirit gave them power and insight. They spoke the words of God. Therefore, when men and women prophesied in the early church they are engaged in **teaching others the words of God that came to them**. And as we shall see in his instructions to the Corinthians, Paul **did not restrict women from praying or prophesying in any venue**. Men and women alike engaged in public worship, using words of prayer to God and words of prophecy to the congregation, prophecy that came to them from the Holy Spirit.

Letters of Paul

Before we look at the interpretation of pertinent passages from the Pauline epistles some preliminaries are in order.

The Pauline epistles, according to Fee and Stuart, are "occasional documents"—documents "arising out of and intended for a specific occasion addressing specific situations...although inspired by the Holy Spirit and thus belonging to all time, they were first written out of a context of the author to the context of the original recipients. It is precisely these factors...that make their interpretation difficult at times...Usually the occasion was some kind of behavior that needed correcting, or a doctrinal error that needed setting right, or a misunderstanding that needed further light...Most of our problems interpreting the epistles are due to...their being occasional. We have the answers, but we do not always know what the questions or problems were—or even if there was a problem...One further point here. The occasional nature of the epistles also means that they are *not* first of all theological treatises, nor are they summaries of Paul's or Peter's theology. There is theology implied

but it is always ‘task theology’—theology being written for or brought to bear on the task at hand.”¹²

Exegesis: Context is key. Although all would agree that this principle is very important, it is *sometimes inconsistently applied* to the passages dealing with the role of women, even to the point of saying that one verse is obviously a command rooted in an ancient culture with no application for today... and then in the **very next verse** saying it is a teaching that transcends time and culture and is for all time and all places. Now it is important to understand why we would think **any teaching** of the Lord does not apply because we are dealing with **the Lord’s words to us**. But once we have ascertained why we think that to be the case, we should apply the principle **consistently**.

Passages from the Bible have a Historical context...and Culture is part of context...and therein lies the challenge. Generally speaking:

There are various interpretations of the **same** data. Scholars disagree about the significance of the **archaeological** data. They don’t agree about what the **Greek text** is really saying and they have not found agreement about the **problem** Paul was addressing in the churches.

When we are trying to understand the culture, care must be taken not to use “culture” in a careless way, the end result being that we slice out of the Scriptures whatever we find uncomfortable or embarrassing—essentially what King Jehoiakim did with the scribe’s knife to the word of the Lord (see Jeremiah 36:1-26.) King Jehoiakim had the prophet Jeremiah’s words read to him. He did not honor the Lord by responding to his word with faith, repentance and obedience. Instead, he decided to disregard the word of the Lord, burning it in a firepot. In a practical we do the same thing if we decide that any teaching that makes us uncomfortable “must have been just for that culture.” Obviously some teaching *is* cultural—we should make sure that is the case before we decide not to obey the word of God.

Understanding the culture helps us understand how the original audience and its problems are like us...and unlike us. Osburn says “It is basic in study of the Bible to stress first, not ‘what it means today’ but, ‘what the writer meant to say **then**.’”¹³

Understanding culture enables “controls” i.e., a verse cannot mean today what it never could have meant to the original audience. Shrable says, “When the cultural situation today is the same as the conditions which called forth the rule in the New Testament age, then the rule applies today. A rule can be ‘once-for-all’ in its **validity** but transitory in its **application**.”¹⁴ For example, when a woman wore a veil in the first century, this act showed

¹² Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003): 58

¹³ Carroll D. Osburn, *Women in the Church: Reclaiming the Ideal* (Abilene: ACU Press, 2001): 46.

¹⁴ Kenneth Shrable, *Roles of Men and Women in Contemporary Culture and Church Models of Change Compatible with Scripture* (Pepperdine University Bible Lectures: Lecture 2: 1996):15.

respect to her husband. If a woman wore a veil today, it would not communicate respect to her husband. It is also helpful to remember the status of women in the first century Gentile cultures who endured life under the Curse without protection of the Code of God. (See Appendix 5: Status of Women in the First Century Gentile cultures.)

It is also necessary to consider the literary context. What literary and linguistic clues can we find in the text. For example, the same Greek word (*sigao*) is used in 1 Corinthians 14:28, 31 & 34); however, this word is translated “remain silent” only once in the NIV in 1 Corinthians 14—when it addresses the women.

Only after we have done our job in exegesis should we attempt to engage in Hermeneutic—i.e., interpretation—what the verse means to me today. We should always remember that, until we understand a verse in its context (what it meant to the original audience) we are not equipped to understand that verse’s application for us today (if indeed it has a direct application.) For example, what was communicated by a woman in the first century wearing gold and braided hair versus what is communicated by those choices today—primarily just a fashion choice.

Another thing that should be kept in mind is the principle taught by the early writers of foregoing personal rights and liberties “for the sake of the gospel”, i.e., the concept of self-imposed restraints on Christian liberty so as not to offend the culture with the end in mind of enhancing and enabling the spread of the gospel message. Note examples of this concept:

- Titus 2:3-10—“...they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, **so that no one will malign the word of God.** ..Teach slaves to be subject to their masters in everything, to try to please them, not to talk back to them, and not to steal from them, but to show that they can be fully trusted, **so that in every way they will make the teaching about God our Savior attractive.** NIV
- 1 Peter 2:13-3:2--Submit yourselves **for the Lord's sake** to every authority instituted among men: „,For it is God's will that **by doing good** you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish men. ..Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is **conscious of God.** ...To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, **leaving you an example**, that you should follow in his steps...he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. ..Wives, **in the same way** be submissive to your husbands **so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives,** ...NIV

It is vital to this discussion that we differentiate between 1st century and contemporary “church” venues since much of our traditional teaching on women’s roles is based on whether or not we are at “church” i.e., “the auditorium.”

- Other than the occasional, temporary use of synagogues and the mention of one school, there is no record in Scripture of the churches owning or having access to any venue that would approximate our definition of a “church building.”
- Church buildings were not being built until **over 200 years after the New Testament Scriptures were written!** Early Christians met primarily in homes. (See Appendix 6: The Introduction of Church Buildings into the Christian Community.)
- This is important to our discussion because many of the verses we will look at have been used to talk about what can go on in a “church building”, a venue unknown to the early Christians.

Galatians 3:26-28

You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. NIV

Occasion/Context: The Galatian church was being troubled by teachers who were questioning Paul’s teaching and apostleship. Paul vigorously defends his apostleship and his message of the gospel of grace. Paul stresses that one does not need to become a Jew first in order to become a Christian.

In these verses Paul emphasizes that only by faith does someone become a true child of God.

Note the use of “all,” signifying benefits enjoyed by all in the community of faith:

ALL are sons of God through faith;

ALL who were baptized have been clothed with Christ; and

ALL are one in Christ Jesus.

The point—inside the family of God—Jews and Greeks (non-Jews) are equal, slaves and free are equal, men and women are equal. **There is no longer any position of privilege in the community of God. Those positions have been abolished by the gospel of grace available to all.**

Some Egalitarians (Evangelical Feminists, i.e., Unlimited Inclusion-ists) have taken this passage to be the “Magna Carta of Humanity” (i.e. the great proclamation of egalitarianism) – and that seems to be overstating Paul’s emphasis. But a careful reading of the text does show that Paul is expanding the discussion beyond Jews and Gentiles sharing a common ground regarding salvation. **It does appear that Paul is trying to get them to think about the ramifications of what it means to be equal in Christ.**

According to what we read in the book of Galatians, slave/free was not an issue in Galatia regarding salvation; neither was male/female. In Galatians 3:28, Paul appears to be **temporarily expanding the topic of discussion, carrying it farther than just salvation. He appears to be planting a seed that will come to fruition in future generations.** It appears

that Paul may be getting them to think, to get them to see that in Christ there is no position of privilege. In that vein, this passage has bearing on our discussion.

Certainly there should be no effort on the part of anyone in the body of Christ to try to create or maintain a position of privilege since the Scriptures inform that such a position no longer exists (in God's eyes) -- in His family we are all one.

1 Corinthians 11 & 14

Culture: Corinth was re-founded by Julius Caesar as a Roman colony. By the time of Paul's travels, Corinth was the largest city in Roman Greece. It was cosmopolitan and full of successful people due to a strong commerce. It was very religious (many pagan deities were worshipped in this town) while morally decadent. Many people became believers from this diverse population.

Context/Occasion: Paul writes a letter of correction on mostly behavioral issues, many of which are centered on the question of what it means to be spiritual.

Regarding 1 Corinthians 11 and 14 and the role of women in the worship assembly: much of the controversy centers around what it meant when it was written and how to apply these teachings today.

- Some ask, "Do the passages even have a direct application today because the church in Corinth did not have a venue (church building with an auditorium) similar to ours?"
- Others say, "Chapters 11 & 14 show women participating equally with the men in the assemblies."
- Still others believe, "Chapter 11 addresses meetings in house churches while chapter 14 addresses the church assembled, where women are told to be silent (i.e., not lead the worship or preach the sermon.)"

Look at the first text: **1 Corinthians 11:3-16**—

*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 for a woman to have her hair cut 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 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 that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. 16 If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice — nor do the churches of God. NIV

The message of this passage is the priority of cultural sensitivities over “freedom.” In that culture, women were supposed to have a “sign of authority” on their head, one possible interpretation being a sign of respect for their husbands. That included a head covering and long hair.

We don’t insist our women be veiled and wear long hair today (in America) because wearing a veil does not convey the message (in our culture) “I am showing my husband respect.” (In Iran, the veil still conveys that message and casting off the veil would not be a trivial matter, however.)

It is noteworthy that in that culture **Paul did not think it problematic that women pray and prophesy as the men do**, as long as their head was covered. Even though he was very concerned that, in their new-found Christian freedom, the women not do things that would dishonor their husbands, he did not number praying and prophesying as the men did as something that was dishonorable.

Look at the text: **1 Corinthians 14:26-35**—

*What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, **everyone** has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. **All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.** If anyone speaks in a tongue, two — or at the most three — should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should **keep quiet** in the church and speak to himself and God. Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should **stop**. 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. **For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints,** 34 women should **remain silent** in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. 35 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. NIV*

Those that would try to say that this passage was a different venue than chapter 11 may have a problem describing what that venue was since the construction of church buildings was still several centuries in the future.

“When you come together...”

- Everyone has something...

- All must be done for the strengthening of the church (the overarching principle of the teaching that follows.)

Reading verses 27-34 in the NASB is helpful because it shows more clearly an identical command in the Greek given three times:

- 1 Corinthians 14:27-28: To those who would speak in tongues in the assembly, Paul instructs, “*but if there is no interpreter, let him **keep silent** (Greek=sigato).*”
- 1 Corinthians 14:29-33: In the assembly, two or three prophets may speak. “*But if a revelation is made to another who is seated, let the first **keep silent** (Greek=sigato).*”
- 1 Corinthians 14:34-35: Paul instructs, “*Let the women **keep silent** (Greek=sigato) in the churches; for they are not permitted to speak, but let them subject themselves, just as the Law also says.*”

What is Paul saying here? Let us start out by reviewing our context: Paul’s overarching principle here—all must be done for the strengthening of the church. The practical application of this principle in Corinth was:

- to tongue-speakers: keep silent unless there is an interpreter;
- to prophets: keep silent when God gives a revelation to another prophet; and
- to wives who appear to have been disrupting the assembly by asking questions at inappropriate times, keep silent and ask your husband when you get home (see vs. 35).

Furthermore, to interpret vs. 34 as a blanket prohibition against women speaking in church would be to render meaningless the statement, “everyone has [a gift to be shared] (a psalm, a teaching, a revelation, a tongue, an interpretation); it also contradicts chapter 11 where he speaks of women praying and prophesying. Such a blanket prohibition would also forbid the women to sing since singing is described as “speak[ing] to one another.”¹⁵

1 Timothy 2:8-15—

I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing. I also want women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or expensive clothes, but with good deeds, appropriate for women who profess to worship God. A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to 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. NIV

This passage is probably the most widely debated passage dealing with the role of women in the church. Scholars line up on many sides with impressive arrays of arguments from

¹⁵ Ephesians 5:19.

archaeology, the Greek language and ancient history. We would ask, therefore, that you view our offering on this passage as an introduction and an invitation to your further study.

What is the occasion and context of Paul's instruction to Timothy for the church at Ephesus? These passages might give us some clues. Keep in mind that Paul's teaching in Acts 20:28-31 was to the elders from the Ephesian church.

Acts 20:28-31--*Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**. Be **shepherds** of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. **Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.** So be on your guard!* NIV This passage reveals that Paul told the Ephesians elders that "savage wolves" would attack their flock by distorting the truth...and that some of them would be numbered among those wolves!

Note Paul's instruction to Timothy regarding identifying and confronting the false teachers:

- "...command certain men (persons, TNIV) *not to teach false doctrines any longer...*" 1 Timothy 1:3.
- "*Some have ...turned to meaningless talk...*" 1 Timothy 1:6.
- "*...they don't know what they are talking about...*" 1 Timothy 1:7.
- The type of men that Timothy should select as new elders should be '*...able to teach...*' 1 Timothy 3:2. They should be able to teach the truth and confront the false teacher.
- Paul writes, "*Do not rebuke an older man harshly, but exhort him as if he were your father. Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity.*" 1 Timothy 5:1, 2.
- Should someone bring Timothy an accusation against an elder, Paul instructs, "*Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses. Those who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.*" 1 Tim 5:19-20
- Read 1 Timothy 5:11-14 regarding the problem with the younger widows. Paul reveals that "*some have in fact already turned away to follow Satan.*" 1 Timothy 5:15.
- When Paul writes 2 Timothy, there is still a problem with false teachers (2 Timothy 2:14-18.)
- Paul further describes these men and their accomplices: "*having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them. They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over weak-willed women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these men oppose the truth — men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected. But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.*" 2 Tim 3:5-9

- In their interpretation of “*always learning but never able to acknowledge the truth,*” the Expositors Bible Commentary states, “*Verse 7 suggests that these women wanted to pose as learned people. But actually they remained in ignorance of the truth.*”¹⁶
- In summary, Paul was instructing Timothy regarding the situation in Ephesus. That situation included a persistent problem with false teachers, some of whom were elders. Some of these false teachers manipulated women who posed as learned but were, in reality, ignorant of the truth.

Immediate Context: (Carroll Osburn does such a good job on 1 Timothy 2:8-15 that I will quote liberally from his book¹⁷ at this point.

1. “The Greek text does not have a main verb in v. 9, so one must be supplied from v. 8. If “*I wish to pray*” is brought over, as most understand to be the case, v. 9 would be understood as a specific instruction to women at prayer. This would cohere with Paul’s admonition in 1 Cor 11:3 that women pray in public worship. “*Likewise*” in 2:9, suggests that, having instructed the men how to pray in Ephesus, Paul now instructs the women the same way.”
2. “1 Tim 2:9-10 presents injunctions that are every bit as serious as those in 2:11-12. Instructions in vv. 9-10 are given without qualification and affirm acceptable standards of decency, as opposed to those found in false teaching.”
3. “The situation in Ephesus is that some Christian women have overstepped traditional roles held by society. Their fundamental attitudinal shift has two facets. 1) They dress in culturally unacceptable ways. 2) They forsake domestic roles, seeking visible, teaching roles in congregational life. In each instance, their attitude is assertive, insensitive, and out of line.”
4. “That these women in the Ephesus church are brazenly over-dressed is stated and not at all unrelated to the following context. The prohibition against excessive adornment should be understood against its cultural background. Diodorus, *Hist.* 12.21, says that golden jewelry or a garment with a purple border was a sign of prostitute...In the *Sentences of Sextus* 513 is a typical observation of the period that, ‘A wife who likes adornment is not faithful.’ In view of these, and many similar statements, the dress and adornment of a wife is certainly very closely related to her submission to her husband.”
5. Such women, disdaining the accepted code of dress, are told in vv. 11-12 that they must *learn*. This certainly denotes inadequate information on their part. That they should learn in a *peaceable* and *deferential* manner suggests some sort of unruly, disquieting, tumultuous, autocratic, domineering, or arrogant behavior on their part...Interest in teaching resulted in arrogant attitudes ... Paul finds this unacceptable.”

¹⁶ *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary, Volume 11* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1982) : 407.

¹⁷ Carroll D. Osburn, *Women in the Church: Reclaiming the Ideal* (Abilene: ACU Press, 2001): 240-252.

6. "In lieu of this situation, Paul stresses in v. 10 that these Christian women would do well to concentrate on healthy teaching conducive to genuinely Christian life-style...These things are just more "fitting" for these Ephesian women who "profess the Christian faith than expressing a lack of respect for their husbands by wearing inappropriate clothing that sends distinctly wrong signals."
7. "It must be kept in mind that the entire letter of 1 Timothy deals with the false teachers mentioned in 1:3ff and Timothy's role in quelling their influence...In 2:11-12, Paul continues to address the problem of insubordination, moving from dress and demeanor to the realm of information."
8. "Two principal views have emerged concerning the interpretation of 1 Tim 2:11-12. 1) One view holds that this text forbids women from teaching or exercising authority over men because of the order of creation. Proponents of this view maintain that the Genesis material in vv. 13-14 provides the reason for the prohibitions in vv. 11-12, and the conclusion is drawn that these sanctions are to be applied universally in all times and places. 2) The other view holds that this is a temporary restraint to curb the inordinate conduct of certain Ephesian women who were teaching the heresy mentioned in 1:3-7 as the reason for the epistle. In this view, the Genesis material in vv. 13-14 provides an example or explanation of how the deception of Eve having drastic consequences parallels that of the women at Ephesus."
9. "To begin with, just as vv. 9-10 are to be understood in terms of ancient cultural values and are addressed to the threat of certain false teachers in Ephesus, so also are the admonitions to silence and submission in vv. 11-12. The stipulations in vv. 11-12 are well in line with first-century AD expectations for women, both in the Jewish and Greco-Roman worlds. Consequently, vv. 11-12 stipulates responsible action for women in response to the sinister teaching that forms the basis of the epistle from 1:3."
10. "In this view, vv. 11-12 is a temporary stipulation intended for a particular situation at Ephesus...vv. 11-12 was intended to curtail the influences and involvement of certain women involved in the false teachings at Ephesus."
11. "V. 11 states that "a woman must learn in a quiet spirit with all submissiveness." The term "learn" (*manthaneto*) is a present imperative in Greek, which means that the term is concerned with the ongoingness of their learning, i.e.," women were participating in worship and learning; but such learning was a relatively new thing for women at that time."
12. "These women, though, have presented a problem in that regard and need to adopt an appropriate manner of learning, e.g., in a spirit of quietude which implies receptivity. They should learn adequate and correct information before challenging their teachers or even trying to teach it themselves. They should remember they are novices, not

“teachers.” Silence was expected of students, both in Judaism and in the Greco-Roman world.”

13. “The phrase, “with all submissiveness,” describes the manner in which these women are to learn...”Submissiveness” refers to a willingness to be taught and to be accountable to what is taught.”
14. “So certain Ephesian women have serious attitudinal problems relating to their dress and adornment and to the learning process going on in the assembly. Paul’s counter in vv. 9-11 is that they should 1) dress in ways that show respect for their husbands and for males in general, 2) be more concerned with basic life-style characteristics that are appropriate for godly women, and 3) undertake the learning of accurate information in a receptive spirit.”
15. “It is easy to understand how 2:12 could be read in English with the conclusion that a woman is never to teach a man or be in a position of authority over a man. However, in the Greek text, the verb “domineer”...qualifies “teach” and specifies what kind of teaching was prohibited. It is not that these women are “teaching” per se, but specifically that they are “teaching domineeringly” that annoys Paul.”
16. “The term *authentein* is taken by some to mean “exercise authority”...but stronger reasons exist for taking it to mean “domineer.” Instead of “domineering over a man,” they are “not to teach *in a domineering way*, but are to be in peaceableness/quietness.” In this context, the term refers to the role of the women who were ...teaching the erroneous information of the false teachers.”
17. “The admonition at the end of v. 12 that these women are to “keep silent”...is not a mandate that women maintain absolute silence in worship. It rather specifies that an attitude of “peaceableness/quietness” be maintained instead of their current attitude of “domineering.” Since in 1:7 Paul specified that “they want to be teachers of the law, but they do not understand what things they so confidently affirm,” it is clear that they need instruction. It follows that if they learn in a peaceable and gentle spirit (v. 11) and teach in a peaceable and gentle spirit (v. 12), Paul would have no problem with them. This is not at all unlike the situation in 1 Cor 11, where Paul had no problem with the women praying and prophesying, only their bad attitude in disdain social customs regarding appearance in public.”
18. “The Greek *gar* [for] in 2:13 indicates that the two following illustrations are intended to support the prohibition against domineering teaching by these women. Paul grounds his prohibition in the creation stories in Genesis. Now v. 13 is often taken to refer to an “order of creation” in which man has authority over woman because Adam came first, and v. 14 is likewise taken to mean that Eve’s gullibility illustrates why women should not teach. Thus, heirarchalists view these as reasons from Genesis for the prohibitions. Alternatively, the Greek term *gar* ...simply introducing an example [for example]. In this

view, vv. 13-14 is a short exposition on Gen. 2:7ff and 3:1ff, texts commonly used by Jewish expositors to teach women a lesson.

19. “Well, Paul is certainly not engaging in exegesis of Gen 1-3. Rather, he is using a common Jewish analogy in which Eve was caricatured as a deceived and bumbling fool who constantly led Adam into trouble...As Chesnutt says, *the portrait of Eve as one constantly weeping, ignorant, perplexed, vulnerable to sin, and dependent on the males around her for insight bears some relation to the way women were actually perceived and treated in the authors’ and redactors’ own time and places.*”
20. “So, Paul does not draw from Gen 1-3 a universal principle from the historical Eve, but an ad hoc analogy from the later caricature of Eve in Jewish tradition. The point of the similarity between v. 12 and v. 13 is that just as it is commonly remarked that Eve was deceived and led Adam astray, so certain women in the Ephesian church lack information and teach false information that leads people astray.”
21. It may be concluded, then, that 1 Tim 2:9-15 was directed to a specific group of troublesome women in a particular place in the early church. Their particular problem was specifically that of being misinformed and domineering teachers. In overstepping traditional roles, some Ephesians Christian women demonstrate a fundamental attitudinal shift which evidences itself in their dress and in forsaking traditionally domestic roles in a quest for visible roles in congregational life. Such domineering and assertive behavior, coupled with such scandalous behavior as overdressing in public, certainly sent the wrong signals to Ephesus about the real nature of Christianity. Hence, Timothy is admonished forthrightly to counter this sinister development in the Ephesian congregation.”
22. So, wherever there are misinformed, unreliable, and domineering women attempting to teach Christian truth, the ancient admonition of Paul to Timothy has direct application. However, nothing is said in this text about informed, reliable, and gentle women teaching—either in church or out, either on religion or not, either to men or women, either to young or old...Put simply, any female who has sufficient and accurate information may teach that information in a gentle spirit to whomever in whatever situation they may be.”
23. “While the particular situation Paul addresses in 1 Timothy arose due to particular *women* who were misinformed and domineering, the point of the text would be equally applicable to any *men* who might be acting similarly.”

For some people, the word “for” beginning in verse 13 links verses 11 & 12 to 13 & 14 in such a way as to make the teaching regarding women not teaching or having authority over men a teaching for all times and places. The thought is that since Paul is appealing to the creation narrative, he must be saying that this teaching is for all time. It is noteworthy that

Paul also appeals to the creation narrative regarding head covering for women in 1 Corinthians 11:7-12. Note what Shrable says in this regard:

*One of the puzzling usages of the appeal to the creation account is Paul's citation of it in one of the arguments used in support of his directive that women in Corinth should wear a head covering when praying or prophesying as a sign of respect for men. This seems clearly to be a "custom" that carries a certain meaning for this particular time and place in "nature," from tradition and "on account of the angels" (1 Cor. 11:10; see esp. vv. 7-12). If an appeal to the creation narrative was sufficient to establish a fact as once-for-all and unchanging, why does Paul use it as only one of his four arguments to sustain his enjoining women to wear head covering. **It seems evident that Paul views the appeal to creation as only one of a number of "persuasive" ideas for requesting conformity to social custom in order not to cause offense** (1 Cor. 10:31 – 11:1). What is even more troubling for those who would try to use an appeal to creation as a final, once-for-all argument is to find it used here dealing with a situation or practice that most scholars concede to be purely cultural matter and which few today find any need to defend as an abiding principle for women to follow.¹⁸*

1 Timothy 3:1-13—

Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus. NIV

¹⁸ Kenneth Shrable, *Roles of Men and Women in Contemporary Culture and Church: Proposed Models of Change Compatible with Scripture* (Pepperdine University Bible Lectures: Lecture 3: 1996): 15.

Verses 1-7 were supplied by Paul to Timothy to describe the characteristics of those whom the Holy Spirit was preparing to be overseers. The text clearly indicates that one characteristic would be that the potential overseer would be “*the husband of but one wife.*”

In his teaching document on elders entitled *Wanted: A Few Good Shepherds (1995; revised 2009)*, Max Lucado says: “The Oak Hills Church has historically limited the role of an Elder to men. This seems to be the intent of Paul’s instructions to Timothy. He explains that married Elders must be the husband of one wife, an admonition only males can fulfill. His list of qualifying adjectives appears in masculine form.

That is not to say women shouldn’t have leadership roles and responsibilities or, in my opinion, teach at church gatherings. Jesus honored and elevated his daughters above the norm of his society. So should we.

We should continue exploring the role of female leadership in the church. A doctrinal advisory group has been established to do exactly this. The committee, comprised of a cross-section of Oak Hills members, will present a report to the Coordinating Committee.

In the meantime, however, it seems best to maintain our present interpretation of Scripture and limit the office of Elder to men. Again, men and women are equal in blessing and responsibility, burden, and promise, but the leadership of the church falls squarely on the shoulders of men.”¹⁹

A reasonable question would be: Is there anything in the occasion of this book, the culture or context that would suggest that this characteristic for leadership was unique to (1) Ephesus or (2) that age. In other words, is there anything that would suggest that this characteristic would not be necessary today—and that a woman could be an overseer?

We know that this characteristic of leadership was also listed in Paul’s letter to Titus in chapter one verse six. Paul was not encountering the same problems on Crete that he encountered at Ephesus, yet the same characteristic was given. This could lead us to believe that this characteristic could be for all churches of all locales and all times.

Some have stated that Paul lists men as the only possible candidates because women would not have been accepted in religious leadership in first century Ephesus. However, new archaeological discoveries may challenge that traditional and long-standing belief. In any event, Biblical interpretation and application that dismisses the plain teaching of Scripture via speculation of what *we think* God was compelled (?) to teach then (but is not compelled to teach now) should probably be avoided as it tends to make us (rather than God) the ultimate judge of what right and wrong.

¹⁹ Max Lucado, *Wanted: A Few Good Shepherds*, Word Publishing, 1995, revised 2009.
Oak Hills Church | A Study of the Role of Women in the Church

1 Timothy 3:11

Does this verse refer to deacons' wives or deacons who were women? The major translations are pretty evenly split on whether this verse should be translated "their wives" or "the women." The more literal translations (Young's, ASV, NASU and NASB) opt for "the women" as well as the TNIV. The KJV, NKJV, NIV, NLT and Living Bible translate it "their wives."

What seems most reasonable? It seems odd that there would be qualifications for the wives of deacons when there are no qualifications listed for the wives of elders. Furthermore, the word "their" is not in the Greek text.

Phoebe is an example of a woman who was a deacon, Romans 16:1. (The Greek word translated "servant" in this verse is the same word translated "deacon" in 1 Timothy 3:11. It would be good to note that the word "deacon" is not a translation of the Greek word *diakonos*, but a transliteration—rendering the letters of a word in one alphabet into the alphabet of another language. A good *translation* of *diakonos* would be servant. "Ministry Leader" is a good, contemporary translation as long as all understand what we are really saying.

Where Should We Go and How Shall We Get There?

(How the Lord may be calling us to change at Oak Hills).

Is there Biblical support for our current practices? In a word, “Yes.”

There is nothing in the Scriptures that would forbid:

- Oak Hills women to lead and serve in roles **acceptable in most conservative evangelical churches**, such as:
- Ministry and teaching for women and children
- Greeters
- Acts of service other any mentioned below

As we have observed, the Scriptures, in context do not forbid:

- Oak Hills women to lead and serve in some roles **not always acceptable in some conservative evangelical churches**, such as:
- Teaching adult co-ed Bible classes
- Leading co-ed groups as Ministry Leaders (deacons) other than ministries for children, women and pastoral care.
- Leading and teaching co-ed Life Groups and Discovery Groups
- Leading prayer in any venue except in the worship center
- Leading as the “officiant” at baptisms in informal settings
- Worship leaders in the worship center
- Serving communion elements in the 10:00 am and 11:30 am services

Likewise, upon careful examination of the Scriptures in context, there does not appear to be any basis (other than, in certain cases, cultural) for barring Oak Hills women from leading and serving in the following roles:

- Preaching and teaching in the worship centers
- Leading the prayers in the worship centers
- Serving communion elements in 8:30 am Sunday service in the worship center.
- Leading as the “officiant” at baptisms in worship center (and river baptism “events”?)

Finally, the majority of our Group concludes that the Scriptures do not bar women from being elders. A minority are undecided about whether or not this is in compliance with the Scripture’s intent and one member (myself) concluding that women are barred by the teaching of the texts in I Timothy and Titus.

As we examine accepted cultural practices In this regard it seems surprising to note that there may be a cultural preference by many men *and women* to be led by men (or rather a cultural preference by men and women to *not* be led by women). I had always assumed that, outside conservative evangelical fellowships most people were “all inclusive”

(egalitarian) in their thinking in 21st century America, including their thinking about leadership. However, two articles in Appendix Seven: Contemporary Biases regarding Women in Leadership may give pause to holding that assumption to be valid. The first article is from the Washington Post regarding biases toward women in leadership and the second is a compilation of numbers regarding the gender of our elected leaders in government and business as well to whom the media looks when they wish to have an “expert” speak.

This is NOT to say that we cannot educate our membership regarding giftedness of all, both men and women, in the kingdom as well as biases that remain in our culture. But we should be aware of what we are facing when we do so.

Changing the paradigm—How should we proceed with change.

*The Way to Change a Paradigm*²⁰

With Bibles in hand, it is time to reevaluate the mindset evangelicals have inherited. This will not be easy. Our commonly shared mindset holds the status of a paradigm, and paradigms are not easily changed. A paradigm is a puzzle solver, a framework in which to organize a vast and complex set of data. The nature of a paradigm is such that it cannot change unless it is replaced with a new one. That is, the community will not let go of a former paradigm until people can obtain a new consensus....

...the paradigm will not change unless another paradigm can effectively do three things:

- 1. account for the biblical data just as well or better than the last one;*
- 2. magnify the unresolved problems of the old paradigm all the way to the extent that the community becomes able to recognize those problems as problems;*
- 3. provide some additional solutions.*

Is Sumner’s plan for changing a paradigm the best way to effect change at Oak Hills?

- Sumner’s plan has much to commend it—it recognizes the quantum shift in thinking that will be necessary for many in order to embrace a new paradigm. It also recognizes that the Biblical foundation must be there. It is an educational approach and suggests spending the time to bring people along in consensus-building exercises.
- If there is a criticism of her plan it might be that it seeks to create discontentment where none may exist. This could have the effect of removing our focus from outreach to inward-focused problem solving.

²⁰ Sarah Sumner, *Men and Women in the Church* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press: 2003): 56-57.

- Actually, maintaining our community outreach focus could open the door to greater leadership opportunity for our women and open the door, comfort-wise, for greater leadership roles for women in our corporate assemblies.

The key to change is consensus building--and that starts with the leadership first! As we have introduced change before—for the mission of God—so this change can be introduced. It would be great if the leadership could attend a weekend retreat lead by someone like Carroll Osburn, a Greek scholar from our own heritage who has made the transition from “Limited Exclusion” to “All Inclusive” in his thinking.

Implementation Suggestions

- Prayer, prayer, prayer as we seek the Lord’s guidance
- Leadership education and consensus building
- Women involved in leadership roles in Community groups from the beginning
- Lessons
- Position Paper
- Start expanding in worship

Parting thoughts:

Dale Pauls says, “Historians would tell us that there is a certain inexorable flow to history, easily seen in hindsight if not foresight; likely they are right. It is, in fact, very probable that in time, perhaps sooner than we might imagine, churches everywhere will have come to understandings and solutions on matters of faith and gender with which we all can live. The spiritual challenge is to arrive at that point with a minimum of bloodletting, to conduct ourselves in ways that are worthy of Jesus, that is, with kindness, mercy, respect, truthfulness, and love. It is wise to remember ... -- that in matters this deep and complex we be “cautious in application and generous in thought.” It would be spiritually unwise, however, to continue so long in discussions on this subject that we fail to take whatever action we should as disciples of Jesus in our time.”²¹

²¹ Dale Pauls, *Faith and Gender* (Stamford, CT: Stamford (CT) Church of Christ website: <http://stamfordchurch.com/FaithAndGender.asp>)

APPENDIX 1: DIFFERENT VIEWPOINTS REGARDING THE ROLE OF WOMEN

(Compiled by Chuck Cunningham)

<i>(Extremist Approach)</i>	<i>(Extremist Approach)</i>	<i>(Moderate Approach)</i>	<i>(Moderate Approach)</i>	<i>(Extremist Approach)</i>
Radical Feminism	Feminist Liberation Theology	Evangelical Feminism	Hierarchical Complementarianism	Patriarchalism
Advocate equality of the sexes	Advocate equality of the sexes	Advocate equality of the sexes	Advocate male authority and leadership	Advocate male authority and leadership
Scripture is essentially a “sexist document rooted in a patriarchal culture” and is therefore, at best, suspect and of little value.	Sees Scripture as a treatise on liberation and social justice for women. Scripture interpreted through feminist agenda.	Accepts Scripture, believing that interpreting Bible in context removes all barriers to full participation in church administration and preaching.	Accepts Scripture, believing that interpreting Bible in context gives women full participation except for church administration and preaching.	Accepts Scripture, believing Bible should be interpreted literally. Proof texting okay. Concludes that women’s roles should be strictly limited.)
Secular feminism denies God exists	Rejects masculinity of God and the Son. “If God is male, then male is God.” Goddess worship.	God is Father, not Mother, but not necessarily masculine. (Some see God as Father and Mother.)	God reveals himself in masculine language = God has given man authority in the home and the church.	God reveals himself in masculine language = God has given man authority in the home, church, community.
Seek to abolish hierarchicalism in every form beginning with the rejection of God.		Trinity=God as a community of three equal persons who are mutually reciprocal beings. (Son not subordinate to Father.)	Trinity=God as a community of three equal persons ranked in hierarchical order. (Son subordinate to Father.) Possible= subordinate yet equal.	Trinity=God as a community of three equal persons ranked in hierarchical order. (Son subordinate to Father.) Possible= subordinate yet equal.

Christianity is an oppressive cultural structure	Christianity has been an oppressive cultural structure but segments are now changing to liberation mode	Christianity is finally realizing the intent of the Scriptures (full participation by women.)	The Scriptures were complete as written—today’s understanding does not reveal a superior ethic	The Scriptures were complete as written—today’s understanding does not reveal a superior ethic
Experience is the major element in the discussion	Experience is a major element in the discussion	Scripture authoritative but experience is relevant	Scripture is authoritative	Scripture is authoritative
Equality and role differences are incompatible.	Equality and role differences are incompatible.	Equality and role differences are incompatible.	Equality and role differences are compatible.	Equality is not a goal
The roots of women’s oppression are men and women will have to take power away from men.	Man’s dominance of women is a Post-Fall situation due to sinful conditions of fallen humanity.	Man’s dominance of women is a Post-Fall situation due to sinful conditions of fallen humanity.	Man’s dominance of women is a Pre-Fall, God-ordained structure.	Man’s dominance of women is a Pre-Fall, God-ordained structure.
All Scriptures viewed as of little or no value.	Galatians 3:28 the “Magna Carta of Christian Feminism	Galatians 3:28 the “guiding hermeneutic” for understanding women’s roles	The context of Galatians 3:28 is universal availability of salvation.	The context of Galatians 3:28 is universal availability of salvation.

APPENDIX 2: Extremist Approaches

1. Radical Feminism

a. Causes for Reactive Position

- i. Women treated as mere sex objects
- ii. Constant sexual harassment and solicitation by males
- iii. Demeaning pornographic society
- iv. Abuse and rape
- v. Viewed as trivial and weak

b. Response: Agenda

- i. Equality
- ii. Full expression of gifts and abilities
- iii. Rejection of male God
- iv. Sexual freedom including abortion
- v. Freedom to choose any form of sexuality
- vi. Political and economic power

c. View of the Bible (quotes from Osborn²²)

- i. *Some radical feminists, such as Mary Daly, essentially reject the Bible as a sexist document rooted in a patriarchal culture, so instead they place a premium on contemporary experience.*
- ii. *(Eleanor) Haney, for instance, critiques the Judeo-Christian ethic as representing 'only a part of Christian and human reality—that of men...it simply is not liberating if it is done by men only and if it is not profoundly informed by feminist perception and values.' So she calls for women to 'challenge 2000 years of apparent wisdom, indeed, 'inspiration.'*
- iii. *Elizabeth Fiorenza locates revelation not in biblical texts but in the experience of women struggling for liberation from patriarchy.*

2. Feminist Liberation Theology

- a. Liberation theologians hold that the central message of the Bible is human liberation.
- b. Liberation Feminists will turn to the Bible, but maintain that all passages that teach submission by females must be reinterpreted thru the lenses of equality offered by liberation theology. The following are more quotes from Osburn:
 - i. *(Rosemary) Reuther rejects the masculinity of God and the Son, arguing that this leaves women unable to identify with Christianity.*
 - ii. *Some feminists refer to God as 'Mother.' A recent hymn, 'Bring Many Names' praises 'Strong Mother God.'*

²² Carroll D. Osburn, *Women in the Church: Reclaiming the Ideal* (Abilene: ACU Press, 2001)

- iii. *In one gathering of feminists milk was substituted for wine in communion and a prayer was addressed to 'Sophia' Greek for 'wisdom,' but also an ancient goddess)..*
- iv. *In its commitment to the destruction of socially-defined sex roles and gender systems, radical feminism disdains as sexist all masculine imagery of God.*

3. Patriarchalism: defined as strict hierarchy of male leadership and female submission.

- a. Patriarchalism is a basic tenet of fundamentalism and complete opposite of radical feminism. (Fundamentalism is rooted in the 19th and 20th century reaction to what they perceived as the cultural decline of American.)
- b. Fundamental Patriarchalism has some features that are commendable—
 - i. It places emphasis upon doing the will of God;
 - ii. Following the biblical text is strongly emphasized;
 - iii. Strong aversion to rampant cultural degradation in society;
 - iv. Stress that church should not accommodate society, but rather be “a light set on a hill.”
 - v. Insist on maintaining differences between male and female.
 - vi. Place a strong emphasis on the home;
- c. However, several of its features render it unattractive and questionable (quotes from Osborn):
 - i. *Patriarchalists seem oblivious to the cultural influences that have shaped much of their view...much of what is held as 'truth' by patriarchalists seems actually nothing more than cultural bias.*
 - ii. *Through 'proof-texting,' patriarchalists have assigned meanings to biblical texts that cannot stand rigorous analysis. The view of the Bible in patriarchal thought fails to question when or how texts about women are descriptive (what happened in ancient times) or prescriptive (what happened is authoritative for today), and it disregards literary and historical contexts in interpretations.*
 - iii. *Often, in Patriarchalism, leadership and submission are actually domination, subjection, and manipulation couched deceptively in language that leads to female degradation.*

Appendix 3: Viewpoints of Various Authors Regarding the Role of Women in the Church

Author and Book/Article/Tape	Gender of Author	Position	Comments
Kenneth Shrable, PhD.: <i>Roles of Men and Women in Contemporary Culture and Church Models of Change Compatible with Scripture</i> (Published Notes from Pepperdine University Bible Lectures)	Male	Interprets Scriptures as descriptive of a “Limited Exclusion” culture but not prescriptive for contemporary church if the current culture is “Unlimited Inclusion.”	Interesting combination of view points from one who in his own words is not a “professional theologian” but is rather a person who “has spent 30 years in secular University setting...in the social sciences with psychology as [his] field of interest.”
Carroll Osburn: <i>Women in the Earliest Church</i> (audio tapes from Pepperine Bible Lectures)	Male	Limited Exclusion	In the tapes he expressed belief that the church is headed toward egalitarian viewpoint. He basically states that all roles open to women except preaching and eldership.
Carroll Osburn: <i>Women in the Church: Reclaiming the Ideal</i>	Male	Unlimited Inclusion	Fair Treatment of both positions. States both have Biblical basis, but at present concludes that egalitarian closest to God’s ideals in the Garden of Eden. All roles open to women.
Sarah Sumner: <i>Men and Women in the Church</i>	Female	Unlimited Inclusion	Gives the viewpoint of a gifted woman who was often barred from using her gifts because

			she was a woman.
Wayne Grudem: <i>Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth</i>	Male	Limited Exclusion	Exhaustive defense of traditional hierarchical complementarians viewpoint.
Leonard Allen: Chapter 17 of <i>Distant Voices: The New Woman</i>	Male	Unknown	This chapter deals with women in the Restoration Movement late 1800's-early 1900's that championed causes for greater involvement of women in the church.
Richard T. Hughes: <i>Reviving the Ancient Faith: the Story of Churches of Christ in America (pages 373-385)</i>	Male	Unknown	This section deals with women in the Restoration Movement late 1800's – mid 1900's that championed causes for greater involvement of women in the church.
Mary Kassian: <i>Women, Creation and the Fall; The Feminist Mistake; The Feminist Gospel (online books)</i>	Female	Limited Exclusion	Traditional defense of hierarchical complementarians position from Genesis and passages regarding submission. Also writes regarding 3 strands of feminism: Radical Feminism, Liberal Feminism and Evangelical Feminism
Andreas J. Kostenbereger: A response to "Teaching and Usurping Authority: 1 Timothy 2:11-15" (Ch12) by Linda L. Belleville	Male	Limited Exclusion	In-depth look at 1 Timothy 2:11-15 as well as discussion of syntax of these verses and of agreement by feminist scholars regarding the hierarchal

			complement- tarian view of syntax of these verses.
John Ortburg: <i>What the Bible Says About...Men and Women [Parts One – Three]</i>	Male	Unlimited Inclusion	Transcript of three lectures regarding Jesus’ elevation of women, mutuality, the church as family, etc.
Max Lucado: <i>Wanted: A Few Good Shepherds, (1995, Revised 2009)</i>	Male	Limited Exclusion	Teaching Resource of UpWords Ministries. Also used as part of a sermon series on qualifications and work of shepherds.
Elders of the Irving Bible Church: <i>Women and Ministry at IBC</i>	Male	Limited Exclusion	Position Paper explaining their understanding that the Scriptures permit women all roles in the church except that of elder.
Dale Pauls: <i>Faith and Gender; Sons and Daughters; Seven Questions</i>	Male	Unlimited Inclusion	Papers describing the rationale for change from Limited Exclusion to Unlimited Inclusion by the Stamford Church of Christ, Stamford, CT.

APPENDIX 4: THE CURSE CODIFIED (AND CONSTRAINED?)

1. Israelite men were told not to covet another man's property (included in the list was another man's **wife**), Exodus 20:17.
2. If an Israelite father sold his daughter into slavery, she was not to go free "as menservants do (see Exodus 21:1ff);" rather, she was to remain a **slave forever**, Exodus 21:7.
3. If an Israelite father's virgin daughter who was engaged to be married was seduced by a man who was not her fiancé, this man owed the father "the **bride-price** for virgins." The **father** would then decide if his daughter would become this man's wife, Exodus 22:16, 17.
4. If two Israelite men were fighting and one hit the other man's pregnant wife, causing her to miscarry, the offender was fined "whatever the woman's **husband** demands and the court allows," Exodus 21:22-25.
5. The Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of the Harvest and the Feast of Ingathering were to be celebrated every year—"all the **men** are to appear before the Sovereign Lord," Exodus 23:14-17.
6. The book of Leviticus deals mainly with the duties of the Levites, the Israelite priesthood. Only **men** could serve as priests.
7. If an Israelite man had sexual relations with his **neighbors wife** or a **virgin engaged to another man**, it was said that he had defiled himself and had committed adultery—he and his partner were to be put to death (Leviticus 18:20; 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:23). The concept of woman as man's property is again suggested because **no punishment** is prescribed in Israel's laws for the married man who had an affair with an **unmarried non-pledged non-virgin such as a widow or prostitute**. Only when a man infringed on the property rights of a husband or a fiancé was this punishment meted out.
8. The Israelites were instructed, if "...anyone makes a special vow to dedicate persons to the Lord by giving equivalent values" they were to set the values according to age and gender, Leviticus 27:1-7. **In every age bracket the male is valued substantially higher than the female.**
9. An Israelite woman suspected of adultery was to submit to a lengthy ritual in order to clear her name, Numbers 5:11-31. **A man suspected of adultery underwent no such ritual.**
10. An Israelite woman would receive an inheritance from her father only if there were **no living sons**, Numbers 27:8.

11. If an Israelite woman who was still living at home with her father made a vow to the Lord, **her father could affirm or nullify the vow**. If an Israelite woman who was married made a vow to the Lord, **her husband could affirm or nullify the vow**, Numbers 30.
12. An Israelite soldier could **force** a captive to marry him, regardless of her wishes, Deuteronomy 21:10-13.
13. It was required that an Israelite woman be a virgin on her wedding day. If her new husband made an accusation that she was not a virgin when they married and that accusation proved to be true, the woman was to be “brought to the door of her father’s house and there the men of the town shall stone her to death,” Deuteronomy 22:13-21. **No such provision existed for Israelite men who were not virgins on their wedding day.**
14. If an Israelite man raped an Israelite virgin who was not pledged to be married, “he shall pay the girl’s father a fine” and then “he must marry the girl, for he has violated her,” Exodus 22:28-29. **It does not indicate that the girl had any say in the matter. However, compared to the surrounding cultures, however, this provided economic and social protection.**
15. The Law made provisions for **men only** to initiate divorce proceedings, Deuteronomy 24:1.

Appendix 5: Status of Women in the First Century Gentile Cultures

1. Status of **Roman** women (from the PBS website: *The Roman Empire In the First Century: Women*: <http://www.pbs.org/empires/romans/empire/women.html>)

Defined by the men in their lives, women in ancient Rome were valued mainly as wives and mothers. Although some were allowed more freedom than others, there was always a limit, even for the daughter of an emperor.

Not much information exists about Roman women in the first century. Women were not allowed to be active in politics, so nobody wrote about them. Neither were they taught how to write, so they could not tell their own stories.

Legal rights

We do know a little, however. Unlike society in ancient Egypt, Rome did not regard women as equal to men before the law. They received only a basic education, if any at all, and were subject to the authority of a man. Traditionally, this was their father before marriage. At that point, authority switched to their husband, who also had the legal rights over their children.

However, by the first century AD women had much more freedom to manage their own business and financial affairs. Unless she had married "in manu" (in her husband's control, which conferred the bride and all her property onto the groom and his family) a woman could own, inherit and dispose of property.

Traditionally, these women, who had married "sine manu" (meaning she was without her husband's control but still under the control of her pater familias), had been obliged to keep a guardian, or 'tutela,' until they died. By the time of Augustus, however, women with three children (and freedwomen with four) became legally independent, a status known as "sui iuris."

A woman's work

In reality, the degree of freedom a woman enjoyed depended largely on her wealth and social status. A few women ran their own businesses – one woman was a lamp-maker – or had careers as midwives, hairdressers or doctors, but these were rare.

On the other hand, female slaves were common and filled a huge variety of roles, from ladies' maids to farm workers, and even gladiators.

Wealthy widows, subject to no man's authority, were independent. Other wealthy women chose to become priestesses, of which the most important were the Vestal Virgins.

Influence, not power

However wealthy they were, because they could not vote or stand for office, women had no formal role in public life. In reality, wives or close relatives of prominent men could have political influence behind the scenes and exert real, albeit informal, power.

In public, though, women were expected to play their traditional role in the household. They were responsible for spinning and weaving yarn and making clothes. These were usually made from wool or linen, although wealthy women (whose servants made their clothes) often dressed in expensive, imported fabrics, like Chinese silk or Indian cotton.

Women were expected to be the dignified wife and the good mother and, while these rules could be bent, they couldn't be broken.

Wedding traditions

Unlike today, marriage had no legal force of its own but was rather a personal agreement between the bride and groom. As a result, the wedding itself was a mere formality to prove that the couple intended to live together, known as “*affectio maritalis*.”

On the wedding day, the groom would lead a procession to his bride's family home, where the bride would be escorted by her bridesmaids to meet her future husband. She would be wearing a *tunica recta* — a white woven tunic — belted with an elaborate “Knot of Hercules.” She would have carefully arranged hair and would be wearing an orange wedding veil and orange shoes. After the marriage contract had been signed, there would be an enormous feast. The day ended with a noisy procession to the couple's new home, where the bride was carried over threshold so she wouldn't trip — an especially bad omen.

Divorce

Roman divorce was as simple as marriage. Just as marriage was only a declaration of intent to live together, divorce was just a declaration of a couple's intent not to live together. All that the law required was that they declare their wish to divorce before seven witnesses.

Because marriages could be ended so easily, divorce was common, particularly in the upper classes. When she divorced, a wife could expect to receive her dowry back in full and would then return to *patria potestas* – the protection of her father. If she had been independent before her wedding, she would regain her independence upon divorce.

Under the *lex Julia*, a wife found guilty of adultery in a special court – known as the “*quaestio*” – might sacrifice the return of half her dowry. However, the law did not recognize adultery by husbands. Roman society was very much a man's world.

Ancient Rome was a man's world. In politics, society and the family, men held both the power and the purse-strings – they even decided whether a baby would live or die.

Families were dominated by men. At the head of Roman family life was the oldest living male, called the "paterfamilias," or "father of the family." He looked after the family's business affairs and property and could perform religious rites on their behalf.

Absolute power

The paterfamilias had absolute rule over his household and children. If they angered him, he had the legal right to disown his children, sell them into slavery or even kill them.

Only the paterfamilias could own property: whatever their age, until their father died, his sons only received an allowance, or *peliculum*, to manage their own households.

Sons were important, because Romans put a lot of value on continuing the family name. If a father had no sons then he could adopt one – often a nephew – to make sure that the family line would not die out.

Materfamilias

Roman women usually married in their early teenage years, while men waited until they were in their mid-twenties. As a result, the materfamilias (mother of the family) was usually much younger than her husband.

As was common in Roman society, while men had the formal power, women exerted influence behind the scenes. It was accepted that the materfamilias was in charge of managing the household. In the upper classes, she was also expected to assist her husband's career by behaving with modesty, grace and dignity.

Baby love?

The influence of women only went so far. The paterfamilias had the right to decide whether to keep newborn babies. After birth, the midwife placed babies on the ground: only if the paterfamilias picked it up was the baby formally accepted into the family.

If the decision went the other way, the baby was exposed – deliberately abandoned outside. This usually happened to deformed babies, or when the father did not think that the family could support another child. Babies were exposed in specific places and it was assumed that an abandoned baby would be picked up and taken a slave.

Infant mortality

Even babies accepted into the household by the paterfamilias had a rocky start in life. Around 25 percent of babies in the first century AD did not survive their first year and up to half of all children would die before the age of 10.

As a result, the Roman state gave legal rewards to women who had successfully given birth. After three live babies (or four children for former slaves), women were

recognized as legally independent. For most women, only at this stage could they choose to shrug off male control and take responsibility for their own lives.

2. Status of **Grecian** women (from a website entitled Women in Ancient Greece: <http://www.womenintheancientworld.com/women%20in%20ancient%20greece.htm>)

Most of our written evidence from the ancient world was produced by educated, well-to-do men. They have undoubtedly left us a reasonably accurate picture of their own life, but how much trust can we put in the comments they made on the lives of everyone else. Nowhere is this situation more troubling than in Ancient Greece where women were largely regarded as inferior creatures scarcely more intelligent than children. Most of the written record comes from Athens; the little bit we know about the other Greek states was more often than not written by an Athenian

The picture that emerges is that seen by the men of the age. There is no reason to doubt its accuracy as far as the law and public appearance is concerned and we certainly know what men thought of women. What women's life was like out of public sight or in the company of other women must remain largely a mystery to us.

Women in Athens

With the notable exception of Plato, Athenian philosophers believed that women had strong emotions and weak minds. For this reason they had to be protected from themselves and they had to be prevented from doing damage to others. Guardianship was the system developed to deal with this perceived quality in women.

Every woman in Athens had a *kyrios* (guardian) who was either her closest male birth-relative or her husband. Although she could own her clothing, jewelry, and personal slave and purchase inexpensive items, she was otherwise unable to buy anything, own property or enter into any contract. Her *kyrios* controlled everything about her life. Citizenship for a woman entitled her to marry a male citizen and it enabled her to join certain religious cults closed to men and non-citizens, but it offered no political or economic benefits.

Girls in Athens were normally married soon after puberty to men who were typically in their late twenties or early thirties. Her father or other guardian provided the dowry and arranged the match. The betrothal symbolized the groom's acceptance of the qualities of the dowry as well as the qualities of the bride.

As in the rest of the ancient world the most important reasons for marriage were:

1. the management and preservation of property
2. the production of children as future care-givers and heirs

Love and affection may have been an important additional function in Ancient Egypt, but they played little or no part in an Athenian marriage. Only children whose both

parents were citizens could become citizens. Simply being born in Athens was not enough. In arranging the marriage, then, citizenship and wealth were important considerations. Since a fair amount of property was involved, a guardian would want to choose the son of a relative or close friend, so marriage usually took place within a small circle. Rich married rich and poor married poor.

A wife's duty was to bear legitimate children (i.e., heirs) and to manage the household. She was expected to remain inside her home except for attendance at funerals and festivals of the specific cults that were open to woman. A woman seen outside on her own was assumed to be a slave, prostitute, concubine or a woman so poor that she had to work. Child care, spinning and weaving were the most important activities in the daily routine of the good wife. One writer said that the best woman was the one about whom the least was heard, whether it be good or bad.

It is quite possible that Athenian reality never quite lived up to Athenian ideal. There is some evidence to suggest that at least some women could read and write and were well informed on the issues of the day. Vase paintings etc. would suggest that women frequently gathered together. Women and men, however, did not socialize together---at least, respectable women and men did not. If a man had guests in his home the women would be expected to remain in the women's quarter. There are few paintings that show husband and wife together after the wedding.

Wives and Non-Wives in Athens

It is often noted that Greece was the culture that invented democracy. Before handing out kudos for this achievement, however, we should remember the rather large number of slaves and other non-citizens who were excluded from any role in government, and we should also remember that of all the major civilizations in the ancient world it was Greece that offered the worst treatment of its women.

Athenians divided all women into two groups: wives and potential wives in the first, and all others in the second. It was almost impossible to move from the second group to the first.

A Draconian law allowed a man to kill on the spot any man caught having sex with his wife, mother, daughter, sister or concubine. This goes well beyond the usual rule in the Ancient World defining adultery as sex with a married woman not his wife, and appears to give a man ownership of the chastity of all "his" women.

Wives were people who produced and cared for children and heirs. They seem to have had little other use in the eyes of Athenian men. They were confined to their homes and were expected to stay out of sight if the husband invited guests to their home. There were cults to which women might belong and it was possible to socialize on occasion with other women, but beyond that women were expected to remain invisible at home. The best wife, according to one writer, was the one about whom the least was said, whether it be good or bad.

Non-wives were divided into several categories and it is probable that individual women moved from one to another as their luck, health and age changed. At the bottom were the women who lived in brothels. Most were slaves; all had a fairly miserable existence. Between customers it seems that many were expected to spin and weave to provide additional revenue for the brothel's owner.

The women on the streets were only slightly better off. Law limited the price they could charge, and required that if by chance two men wanted the same girl at the same time they could draw lots but they could not bid against each other. In Syracuse there was a law limiting to prostitutes the public display of **gold jewelry and brightly colored clothes**---a sort of uniform that anyone could recognize.

The next category included the heteras (call girls and courtesans). These were the women who offered more than just a warm body. Some could sing or play a musical instrument. Others were talented, knowledgeable conversationalists. Wives were thought to be a particularly stupid group of people with whom a man would want to spend as little time as possible. Heteras, on the other hand, knew something about the world at large and could be quite entertaining.

The Symposium was a gathering of men for eating, drinking and especially conversation. Heteras were often as important an ingredient in the success of such an occasion as was the food and drink. Sex was sometimes taken for granted, but very frequently the women went no further than light hearted flirting. They were hired for their ability to entertain intellectually and their charges reflected these talents not their physicality.

Some heteras were successful enough that they owned their own homes and entertained there as they pleased.

Concubines were women in a reasonably permanent relationship with one man. They were usually maintained in their own home and would roughly correspond with the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century mistress.

While female slaves were not immune to their masters' desires, it was normally considered bad form to engage in extra-marital sex in a wife's home and opportunities outside of the home were plentiful.

While Greece was not one of those societies in the Ancient World that believed sex with temple prostitutes was necessary to promote the regeneration of crops and herds, the non-wife was a very important part of the social system. A wife was a necessity in order to have legitimate children and heirs, but a man's normal desire for female companionship and sex was something to be satisfied outside of marriage. A woman's desire for male companionship was never given much thought.

Appendix 6: The Introduction of Church Buildings into the Christian Community

1. [Excerpts from Pagan Christianity by Frank Viola & George Barna](#)

As quoted on the website *Awaiting Rain*:

http://awaitingrain.typepad.com/awaiting_rain/2008/02/red-pill-chro-1.html

Red Pill Chronicles - The Constantine Effect

Did you know...

That when Christianity was born, it was the only religion on the planet that had no sacred objects, no sacred persons, and no sacred spaces? The Christian faith was born in homes, out in courtyards, and along roadsides.

When Constantine became emperor of the entire Roman Empire in 324 he began ordering the construction of church buildings. He did so to promote the popularity and acceptance of Christianity, thinking that if the Christians had their own sacred buildings - as did the Jews and the pagans - their faith would be regarded as legitimate. He named his church buildings after the saints - just as the pagans named their temples after gods.

The church edifices built under Constantine were patterned after the model of the basilica. They were wonderful for seating passive and docile crowds to watch a performance. Christian basilicas possessed an elevated platform where the clergy ministered. The platform was usually elevated by several steps. There was also a rail or screen that separated the clergy from the laity. In the center of the building was the altar whereupon the Eucharist was offered. No one but the clergy, who were regarded as "holy men," was allowed to receive the Eucharist within the altar rails.

In front of the altar stood "the bishop's chair" (cathedra - meaning "throne") surrounded by two rows of chairs reserved for the elders. The sermon was preached from the bishop's chair with power and authority resting in the chair. Interestingly, most present-day church buildings have special chairs for the pastor and his staff situated on the platform behind the pulpit (with which the reformers replaced the altar table).

The result of this was that there was a loss of intimacy and open participation. The professional clergy performed the acts of worship while the laity looked on as spectators. The church building demonstrates that the church, whether she wanted it or not, had entered into a close alliance with pagan culture. Church buildings took the place of temples; church endowments replaced temple lands and funds. Under Constantine, tax exempt status was granted for all church property.

Even after he became emperor, Constantine allowed the old pagan institutions to remain as they were. Following his conversion to Christianity, Constantine never did abandon sun worship. In AD 321, Constantine decreed that Sunday would be a day of rest - a legal holiday. It appears that Constantine's intention in doing this was to honor the god Mithras, the Unconquered Sun.

Almost to his dying day, Constantine still functioned as the high priest of paganism. In fact, he retained the title Pontifex Maximus, which means chief of the pagan priests! In the fifteenth century, this same title became the honorific title for the Roman Catholic pope.

2. Excerpts from Where Did Church Buildings Come From by Gene Edwards:

“Not long before Constantine's time, the Christian church experienced under the emperor Diocletian, the period of its worst persecution. In modern times the persecution of the Christian church during the first three centuries has been glamorized and exaggerated, but the period just before Constantine was truly a terrible time for the church.

The severest part of Diocletian's persecution was that it crippled the church's leadership. This left the church wide open to the tragedy that befell it when Constantine came along and befriended the beleaguered church leaders while professing to be a Christian. The church, withered by persecution, was caught with her guard down, and her leadership weak. One of the great mysteries is why no prophet arose in that hour to denounce what took place under Constantine.

Constantine was the first "medieval" believer. He had the mind of a Caesar (an emperor). He had absolute authority in everything, and that definitely included the Department of Religion. Secondly, he had the mind of a pagan - which is a world that sees darkness, spookiness, weirdness, ghosts, apparitions, worship of idols: in a word, superstition. In another word, paganism! ...he was reported and defended as having a sudden and miraculous conversion upon beholding a cross appearing in the heavens that bore the inscription "By this thou shalt conquer." ...this tradition is very doubtful and the fact is that he had very little Christian thinking which reformed his predominantly paganistic values.

Blend all that together, and you have the basic ingredients of the mind of a medieval "Christian." Eventually this happened on a grand scale. The Christian faith, paganism and the mind of the Roman Empire flowed together to produce the Christian outlook of post-A.D. 500.”

“Let us look now at a very special date in church history, the year 324. In fact, we picked up more traditions, ... and changed the course more radically from 323 to 327 than any other period in history. Look what happened during this time. The city of Constantinople

was founded in 323. The first Council of Nicaea occurred in 325. The first church buildings ever erected on this planet were planned and begun in 323. In 326 Constantine's mother made a trip to the Holy Land ..., to seek out the place of Christ's birth and crucifixion. Finally in 327 Constantine left Rome and bequeathed his place to Sylvest, the senior minister of the church in Rome.

Let us look at Constantine's founding of the city of Constantinople (Istanbul). He planned a gigantic capital which he called New Rome. This city sat, literally, half in the Orient and half in the Occident.

He built a new and uninhabited city from the ground up. In it he commissioned the building of pagan temples, and something he designated as buildings for Christians to meet in. A pagan temple of that time was a small, round building, with stairs leading up to an altar in the middle. Usually the people gathered around the temple and worshipped while standing outside. Across the street from some of these pagan temples, Constantine commissioned Christian meeting places. These buildings were not shaped like pagan temples, but **like the government civic auditoriums**. (Christians had always met inside. But it was inside of homes). Here, for the first time, stood officially designated places for Christians to meet. This was a wonder which no Christian had ever seen before. Put another way, *it was in 324, almost three hundred years after the birth of the church, Christians first met in something we now call a "church building." For all three hundred years before that the church met in living rooms!*

Constantine built these assembly buildings for Christians not only in Constantinople, but also in Rome, Jerusalem, and in many parts of Italy, all in A.D. 324. This triggered a massive "church building" fad in large cities all over the Empire.

Out of his pagan mentality, Constantine ordered each building to be named after one of the Christians in the New Testament, because pagan temples had always been named after gods. So the builders put a word like "Joseph" on the front of each building, or "Mary" or "Peter" or "Paul." The die is beginning to be cast. We are headed straight for a totally different kind of Christian worship, in a totally different atmosphere, than the first century believer had ever dreamed of

Constantinople was finally completed, and people moved there in droves from Rome. Imagine a typical Christian walking into one of these strange looking "Christian buildings." He had never seen anything like this! I suppose he walked into the building and sat down on the cold stone floor (Constantine had forgotten to invent the pew). This definitely was no comfortable living room.

But trying to figure out whether to sit on the cold floor of a building or stand throughout the whole meeting (as the pagans did across the street) caused one of the marked differences between the Eastern church and the Western church. The Italians dragged in

benches and got comfortable. The Greeks stood up. (The Western church grew, the Eastern church did not).

By now people were coming into the church en masse out of paganism, following the example of their emperor, Constantine. The church was changing to accommodate them, introducing **ritual** in the meetings, with chanting and pageantry - all things familiar to these ex-pagans. The clergy (a word used originally to designate a pagan priest) began to wear strange clothing (costumes, if you please) to set themselves apart from the laity. Church buildings sprouted up everywhere on the crest of state tax money pouring into the church's coffers all over the Roman Empire. Soon the living room meetings were but a memory, and even that memory seems to have been stamped out. Until that time tax money had been channeled exclusively to the pagan religions. By A.D. 400 it flowed exclusively to the church. Pagan priests were becoming Christian priests to keep up with the whereabouts of their money. Government officials were becoming Christian priests because it was lucrative to do so.

Now you know where such ... things as church buildings, pews, ... came from. By the way, the pagan temple's choir was also transplanted over into the Christian buildings in the mid-400's."

Around 500 A.D. a gentleman whom history has given the name Gregory the Great was serving as bishop of Rome. At that time Rome was not much more than a cow pasture, the city long in ruins; yet despite this the power of the bishop of Rome was growing. Gregory invented and decreed one **order of worship** for all churches in Christendom. And he got it! Furthermore that "order of worship" has not been changed for Catholics in fifteen hundred years. ...you should know that Martin Luther invented the Protestant way of worship on Sunday morning, and it has not changed in over four hundred years!

**Appendix Seven: Contemporary Biases regarding Women in Leadership
When Latent Biases Matter
By Cathy Tinsley /Georgetown University**

Tinsley, a professor at Georgetown's McDonough School of Business, is executive director of the Georgetown Women's Leadership initiative. This Column first ran in The Washington Post.

Last month, it became increasingly clear that Hillary Clinton may no longer be within reach of the Democratic presidential nomination. While it is uncertain when Clinton's historic candidacy will actually end, many in the media and in political circles are debating the role sexism played in her defeat.

How did the once-inevitable candidate, who was destined to be America's first female president, lose this nomination battle? Was it her past? Was it her husband? Or is American just not ready for a female president?

Though it's difficult to draw definitive conclusions, behavior and attitudes in the corporate sphere shed some light on the answers to these questions. Unfortunately, the picture suggests we still have work to do.

In a series of studies involving hundreds of participants since 2005, my colleagues and I have found systematic social and financial backlash against even mildly assertive female executives. In one study, for example, people judged the behavior of a hypothetical human resources manager (alternately male or female) negotiating for a refund on unused hotel space. Female managers were judged as significantly more offensive, and less likely to receive any refund, than male managers, even though they engaged in exactly the same behavior. In later studies in which human resources managers asked for a refund, displaying mildly assertive behavior, the behavior was routinely judged appropriate when displayed by a man but offensive when displayed by a woman.

In another set of experiments, a finance director (again, alternately a man or a woman) had to choose between attending to a work crisis (an information technology system crash) or a family emergency (a sick child). When the finance director was female and chose to stay at work, she was seen as competent but unlikable. When the female finance director went home, she was rated as incompetent but likable. Yet the choices male finance directors made did not matter—the men were always judged to be fairly likable and competent.

The bottom line is that the same male and female behaviors evoke different judgments, with women all too often being forced to choose between being viewed as likable or competent.

Though I think, and hope, that we are more or less past the time when women are denied opportunities in politics, sports or business, the studies do not suggest an end to

discriminatory attitudes. Americans still appear to perceive and evaluate men and women differently even when they engage in the same behavior.

Two other lessons stood out. First, the backlash against women appears to be unconscious. When confronted with study results, participants were surprised by their reactions. They appeared to have no idea that they subscribed to gender stereotypes about appropriate behavior or that they judged women more harshly.

Second, women were as willing to criticize the female executives as men were. This is not a gender war; women are not fighting men. They are fighting our culture, our prescribed set of norms that constrain their behavior into a rigid set of “appropriate” categories. Though we may be able to recall vivid examples of minorities who judge their own group harshly, women are perhaps the only “low status” group whose members systematically and every bit as harshly show prejudice toward fellow members.

As we close the book on Clinton’s campaign and what was to be the first female presidency, we are forced to reassess. Are we ready yet?

**Regarding “Accepted Cultural Practices”
By Chuck Cunningham**

Much of the discussion regarding the role of women in the church has been addressed to culture. Some emphasize that one position is actually emphasizing a past culture while others stress that others overly emphasize the current culture.

A little history--on June 10, 1963 Congress passed the Equal Pay Act, making it illegal for employers to pay a woman less than what a man would receive for the same job.

In 1964, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act was enacted, barring discrimination in employment on the basis of race and sex. At the same time it established the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) to investigate complaints and impose penalties. Regardless of whether this act reflected current culture, led culture or a combination of the two, it had the effect making it illegal to discriminate against women regarding employment. It has been the law for 43 years. It is interesting to note that during this time The Equal Rights Amendment, first proposed in 1923, is still not part of the U.S. Constitution since it has not been ratified by the necessary 38 states (35 have ratified.)

The purpose of this paper is to point to a few facts that might keep us from jumping to the conclusion that our culture is an egalitarian one. These are raw numbers and scientific interpretation is outside my expertise. Therefore, please view the statements below along the line of observations by a layman.

When Americans chose their leaders without regard for mandates of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, who do they choose?

Position	Number of Men	Number of Women
Governors	41	9
US Senators	84	16
US House	368	67
Fortune 500 Presidents	490	10
Fortune 1000 Presidents	980	20

Regarding Governors, the gender of these leaders in Texas and adjacent states are as follows: Texas=M; Louisiana=M; Arkansas=M; Oklahoma=M; New Mexico=M.

In conclusion, I am not saying that the above **proves** anything. Rather, these things are presented with the hope that we might not be too quick to conclude that our culture is egalitarian or that “accepted cultural practice” is feminist. Cultural change is often very slow and we may end up in a “pioneering” role in this regard.

I found excerpts from an article at the FAIR (Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting) website (Extra! May/June 2002) <http://www.fair.org> by Ina Howard entitled *Power Sources: On party, gender, race and class, TV news looks to the most powerful groups.*

Women's restricted role

After U.S. politicians, "unclassified citizens"—a category that can be used as a proxy for ordinary Americans—were the most common individual type of source, providing 20 percent of all quotes. While it is valuable to hear the voices of ordinary citizens on the nightly news, the context in which most of their sound bites appeared makes it unlikely that their viewpoints did much to shape the nation's political debate: They were more often presented in human interest stories, crime reports and entertainment news than in all "hard" news topics combined, leaving discussion of most policy issues to "expert" political and economic elites.

*While women made up only 15 percent of total sources, they represented more than double that share—40 percent—of the ordinary citizens in the news. **This reflects a tendency to quote men as the vast majority of authoritative voices while presenting women as non-experts:** women made up only 9 percent of the professional and political voices that were presented. More than half of the women (52 percent) who appeared on the news were presented as average citizens, whereas only 14 percent of male sources were.*

ADDENDUM TO CHAIRMAN’S REPORT

As stated in the introductory comments to the Chairman’s Report, Chuck recognized that his conclusion about one issue was a minority opinion relative to the rest of the group. He took the position that women are forbidden to be elders in the church by the passage in 1 Tim. 3:2 (NIV) which says that elders must be “the husband of but one wife.” He invited anyone who would to write a “majority opinion” on whether scripture restricts women from serving as elders. That was written, subjected to the Group’s editing process, and accepted by Chuck as “good work.” It became the “Addendum to the Chairman’s Report.”

The DAG

Addendum to Chairman's Report

Does Scripture Restrict Women From Serving As Elders?

Revised May 4, 2009

The chairman of the Doctrinal Advisory Group invited further study of the specific question as to whether scripture restricts women from serving as elders in the church. We had the benefit of considering the question in the light of the broad, comprehensive teaching of scripture, since this study came at the end. Also we attempted to determine current practice and found ourselves in the uncomfortable position of assessing the very authority structure which had commissioned the study. Nevertheless, we respectfully and prayerfully submit our findings in this Addendum.

Oak Hills Church maintains a traditional, male-dominated leadership structure. Male elders and male senior ministers exclusively make the decisions and cast the vision for the entire Body of Christ. If one examines the organizational chart of Oak Hills Church, he/she sees that there are several layers of management above the level where the first women occur. At the top, our men serve without the benefit or complement of God-given female helper/companions in leadership roles. Most of the male leaders are married, and their wives faithfully support and serve alongside them. Oftentimes, the opinions held by elders' wives are considered valuable input, but wives are not part of the organizational structure.

The first value the group agreed upon at the beginning of our study was that we would respect the authority of scripture for teaching and for practice. Thus the need is great to determine whether the practice is in obedience to scripture.

If, as Gal. 3:26-29 says, we are all baptized sons of God, clothed with Christ, and if there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, among the sons of God, can it be right that male leadership claims the exclusive responsibility to decide whether female members can use their gifts of leading, shepherding, teaching, relating, public praying, envisioning, and planning for the good of the entire Body of Christ?

Furthermore, the gender unbalance of our leadership structure raises issues of justice. In the church we have government without representation of women who make up a large percentage of our membership. This is hard to defend given the democratic ideals of our own culture.

In this Addendum, we would dare to engage the possibility that God has at this time begun to move in His churches to reconcile men and women to each other and to more effectively project His own image – male and female as he created them (Gen. 1:27). This calls, not for female elders or female pastors to rule over the male members, but for a shared male and female leadership, each living in obedience to the head of the Body, Christ Jesus.

As a doctrinal study group we came to the point where we had examined most all of the scripture passages about women and we all had moved away from the traditional

hierarchical view, toward a more egalitarian understanding. However, one passage remained to tie some of us to an exclusively male eldership – 1 Tim. 3:2: "Now the overseer (elder) must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife..." To others of us the authority of this verse to restrict the women in the church was not so apparent. In fact, it did not appear to even be related to the issue of what women could do in the church. It was an instruction written to a culture where there would be only male overseers and therefore there was no need for Paul to add "or the wife of but one husband..." or to make the gender inclusive by saying, "the spouse of one other."

This Addendum is written to explain the basis of the conclusion that women are not excluded from church eldership by the biblical requirement (in 1 Tim 3:2 and Titus 1:6) that elders be "the husband of but one wife." Beyond the obvious observation that the passage is about choosing elders of good character and not whether women can be elders, the conclusion arises from two inter-related arenas: (1) textual translation issues, and (2) questions about interpreting instruction concerning cultural practices of the time in which it was written.

The Greek phrase which occurs in 1 Tim 3:2, in a list of qualifications of church overseers, is translated in the NIV as "the husband of but one wife". (Variations of this phrase occur twice more in the same epistle and we will look at those also.) The word "but" is added in the NIV to favor the meaning that the issue in the text is number of wives. The actual English equivalents of the Greek words in an interlinear text are: "of one wife husband." Thus in applying this requirement in today's world, some have suggested that this is a phrase describing the faithfulness of the character of the elder candidate – something like being a "one-woman-man." With that interpretation some have allowed widowers, unmarried individuals, and divorced and remarried men who met the other qualifications, to be elders.

Another translation issue arises in 1 Tim 3:11 where the text says, "In the same way, their **wives**..." The word translated "their wives" could also be translated "women." In the first case, as the NIV has it, the instruction is to the wives of deacons. We are left to wonder why the wives of deacons were instructed and not the wives of overseers. In the second case, the instruction is to women deacons,²³ which suggests that the gender specificity of the "husband of one wife" phrase in verse 12 is due simply to a limitation of language. In other words, if female deacons are being described, the passage would be translated: "In the same way, women deacons are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be the spouse of only one other, and must manage his/her children and household well."

²³ See Osburn, Carroll D., ed., *Essays On Women In Earliest Christianity*, v I; p 319, "The Identity of the 'Women' in 1 Tim 3:11" by Barry L. Blackburn. After a thorough exploration of the text, Blackburn concludes that the instruction is to church deaconesses.

Having opted to translate 1 Tim. 3:11 as referring to the wives of the deacons and not to women deacons, the NIV translates the phrase in question, “the husband of but one wife.” Whether this should restrict women from being deacons is highly questionable, since Romans 16:1 refers to Phoebe, a sister and a servant (deaconess) of the church in Cenchrea. From this, we know there were female deacons in the early church. It follows, if the phrase does not restrict women from being deacons, and the evidence says that it did not, it also does not restrict women from being elders in 1 Tim. 3:2.

There is another occurrence in 1 Tim. 5:8 where Paul is laying out qualifications for older widows to be put on the list of those supported and used as ministering servants by the church.²⁴ The Greek phrase is parallel to the first two occurrences of the phrase “husband of but one wife,” except that here, since Paul is talking about widows, he changes the genders. We would expect the NIV to be consistent and say, “wife of but one husband,” but it does not. Here the translators elect a more abstract meaning and supply “has been faithful to her husband.”

Presumably, all three instances of this phrase in 1 Timothy could be translated in a similar way: elders, deacons, and widows or widowers placed on the roll for support, should have been faithful to their spouses. If one disagrees with the way the NIV translators interpreted 1 Tim. 5:8, we must at least recognize that it is questionable to restrict women members from serving as leaders on the basis of choices which were made in the translation process, rather than in clearly stated eternal principles. The question remains, does God, through Paul's writing to Timothy at Ephesus, intend these verses to limit church leadership to men in 1 Tim 3:2 and 1 Tim 3:11, or could the gender usage in these verses be determined by Paul's assumption that in the culture to which he was writing, positions of leadership were customarily held by males. We think the textual evidence supports the latter.

Having given up a hierarchical model for male/female relationships in our study, many of us see no basis for perpetuating hierarchical relationships in the church organization. From Genesis 1-3, we were able to discard the teaching that from creation woman was made subordinate to man. It seems clear to us that the rule of man over woman came with sin and the curse. However, because of the redemption of mankind from the curse of sin by the sacrifice of Jesus, we believe that individuals can be transformed by the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit into Sons of God – male and female “sons of God,” in His image. And now, in Christ, male and female are reconciled and the two can be one, as God intended. We envision a church where both men and women participate in leadership and decision making which impacts the entire church body, a model which appropriates for the church the gifts and unique attributes of all members.

²⁴ ibid, p. 318; “The Identity of the ‘Women’ In 1 Tim. 3:11,” by Barry L. Blackburn; and p. 365, “The ‘Widows’ in 1 Tim. 5:2-16,” by Marcia Moore. Both authors conclude that the widows were enrolled for their own support and also for the service they could give the church community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Included in the original DAG report that was presented to the Coordinating Committee were some recommendations for next steps. However, soon after this presentation, the DAG was invited to discuss our work during a meeting of the Coordinating Committee. At that time, we were requested to submit more specific recommendations for the Committee's action. Both sets of recommendations have been included here.

The DAG

DAG Recommendations – Included in the original report

- Provide opportunity for ministry based on giftedness and character, without regard to gender.
- Provide a core value statement that reflects OHC biblical interpretation of the roles of men and women in the church.
- Create opportunities for exploring and expressing biblical truth on this subject, particularly among those in leadership.
- Be intentional about removing artificial barriers that inhibit men or women from serving in the areas of their giftedness.
- Teach and model these values to members of the church, our community, and to the world. (If specific teaching on this issue from the pulpit is not optimal at this time, consider other options such as Peak of the Week, adult Bible classes, small group settings, round table discussions, and online formats).

More Specific Recommendations for Implementation – Provided later as requested

The CC has asked for a more detailed implementation plan for the results of the DAG study on the Role of Women in the Church. Here is what the DAG proposes.

1. PRAYER

2. STUDY

- a. Begin by reading about interpretation of scripture. We suggest –
 - *The Blue Parakeet*, by Scot McKnight
 - *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth*, Chapters 1-4, by Gordon Fee and Douglas Stuart.
- b. To get the whole story about women and the church –
 - Examine Gen. 1-3 and trace the use of those references in the New Testament.
 - Note how Jesus related to women in the Gospels.
 - Consider the relevant texts from the epistles with attention to the entire Biblical context, cultural issues, translation issues, and the particular situations in the churches as the Gospel spread. (Refer to “Discussion of Scriptures” and “Summary of Concepts” in the DAG Report.)

3. EXPAND THE STUDY – TO LEADERSHIP

- a. Include all elders and ministers. In addition, inclusion of women at this point is key.
- b. Include teachers who would be involved in teaching the whole church.

4. EXPAND THE STUDY FURTHER – TO THE CONGREGATION

- a. Plan and execute interactive forums for medium-sized groups.
- b. Teach in venues such as Peak of the Week, Adult Bible Classes, Small Groups, and on-line formats.

- c. At the conclusion of the study phase, draft a core value statement which addresses the church's position on the subject. Publish this widely through all OHC communication channels.

5. APPLY CHANGED PERSPECTIVES TO IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN

- a. Assign ministry and leadership roles based on the belief that the church is best served when men and women share responsibilities and serve together as complementary partners. (See "Conclusion" in DAG Report.)
- b. Provide access to ministry roles based on giftedness, rather than on gender.
- c. Intentionally remove all artificial barriers that inhibit men or women from serving God in their areas of giftedness. A specific way to begin this process follows.

Each ministry area should be charged with evaluating how individuals are chosen to participate – is the process giftedness-driven or gender-driven? Do we have artificial barriers that need to be removed?

Example: Worship – the most visible ministry, the one people see on their first visit – makes a statement immediately to those who come to OHC. Ask ourselves –

- Who is involved in the planning of worship?
- Who has input as to what is included in announcements? Are women's activities included?
- Who sings? [women well integrated] Who plays instruments? [all male]
- Who reads scripture? [not currently performed by women]
- Who prays? [not currently performed by women]
- Who serves communion, passes collection baskets? [performed by women sometimes]
- Who serves as worship host? [ask Selma or another female minister to be included in rotation]
- Who baptizes? [no women included in worship assembly or river baptisms]

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After the Coordinating Committee had studied the DAG report for themselves, they made the decision to put it into the hands of the entire body of 61 elders for their study and for them to make decisions effecting women's role at the Oak Hills Church. The Coordinating Committee distributed the DAG report prefaced by an Executive Summary.

The DAG

Executive Summary Cover Letter

Fellow Elders,

Attached you will find your copy of the Doctrinal Advisory Group's report on the Role of Women in the Church. The study was first commissioned in 2007 and was chaired by our dear brother Chuck Cunningham. Joining him in this important work were Mark Tidwell, Joy Pruett, Richard Smith, Cheryl Green, Rod Chisholm, Rick Powell and Davida Lambert. We owe them all a debt of gratitude.

Originally established as an advisory group under our old bylaws, the Doctrinal Advisory Group served as a committee in compliance with Section 9.01 of our church bylaws and worked under the general supervision of the Coordinating Board. So, it is a great privilege to present you with their stellar work.

The purpose of this "Executive Summary" is twofold;

1. To encourage you to drink deeply from the Doctrinal Advisory Group's in-depth study.
2. Provide you with a brief summary of where your Coordinating Committee ended and serve as a beginning point for your personal study.

May you be blessed and God be glorified as we move forward in this important topic.

Blessings,

Keith Kennington
Richard Smith
Ted Ownby
Jerry Hale
Steve Green
Randy Frazee
Max Lucado
Mark Tidwell
Jim Dye

Executive Summary

Over the past many months your coordinating committee has devoted much personal prayer, individual study time as well as regularly scheduled meeting times to evaluating the DAG report in its entirety. Throughout the process we have discussed, deliberated and debated each of the concepts, principles and scriptures mentioned in the report.

In the final analysis, we concur with the Doctrinal Advisory Group's findings, recommendations and recommended implementation strategy with one exception.

We embrace the teaching that the qualifications for Christian service are;

- Commitment to Christ
- Giftedness by God
- Empowerment by The Holy Spirit

We recognize that the societal culture in the first century greatly restricted women. However, we noted that the culture of that society did not necessarily transfer or carry over into the practices of the first century church as we have examples of female believers;

- Leading Worship (1 Cor. 11:5)
- Hosting the Church (Acts 12:12, 16:40)
- Team Teaching Theology (Acts 18:26)
- Serving as Deaconess (Romans 16:1-2)

In fact, we have "counter cultural" examples of women serving in the New Testament church in virtually every way with the exception of serving as an elder.

For that reason, the majority of the Coordinating Committee believe reserving service as an elder to men only was neither a first century cultural limitation nor a theological error on the part of the first century believers that now needs to be corrected in light of our current societal culture.

Finally, brothers, we spent a great deal of time and energy discussing Ephesians 5:23. For all we don't understand or know about this verse, we do know this; in the same way that Christ is the head of the church, man is to be the head of his wife. We conclude that the responsibilities associated with that gender specific role would also transfer to the function of shepherding Christ's church as an elder.

Today, just as it did in the first century church, universally applicable scriptural principles must always outweigh the pressures of current culture and "political correctness" whether it takes the form of feminism or male-dominated hierarchicalism.

May God bless you as you prepare to wrestle with this important issue for it is indeed significant as we would want neither to prohibit what God would allow nor allow what He would prohibit.

RESOURCES

This is a bibliography of resources actually consulted in the process of the study. The Chairman made sure that authors representing all of the approaches were consulted.

Different members of the DAG brought materials to contribute to the study, but no one source was found to be an adequate, comprehensive treatment of the issues.

Though many other articles, web sites and books were considered, this listing represents those resources that the entire group reviewed and discussed together.

The DAG

Resources

Allen, C. Leonard. *Distant Voices: Discovering a Forgotten Past for a Changing Church* (Chapter 17: The New Woman). Abilene, Texas: ACU Press, 1993.

Belleville, Linda L. "Teaching and Usurping Authority: I Timothy 2:11-15". *Journal for Biblical Manhood and Womanhood*, Spring 2005.

Cope, Mike. "Women, Gifts and the Body of Christ" (Sermon Series). Abilene: Highland Church of Christ.

Discussion on Faith and Gender. Letters from the Elders to the Congregation, Sermons, Outline of Bible Class. Los Angeles: Culver Palms Church of Christ, 1996-1998. Retrieved from www.culverpalms.org.

Fee, Gordon D. and Stuart, Douglas. *How to Read the Bible for All Its Worth* (3rd Edition ed.). Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2003.

Fee, Gordon D. and Stuart, Douglas. *How to Read the Bible Book by Book*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan, 2002.

Fudge, Edward. "Women 'Be Silent' in the Church (2)". gracEmail, April 22, 2008.

Grudem, Wayne. *Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth: An Analysis of More Than 100 Disputed Questions*. Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah, 2004.

Heidebrecht, Doug. "Reading 1 Timothy 2:9-15 in Its Literary Context". Retrieved from www.directionjournal.org, 2004.

Hughes, Richard. T. *Reviving the Ancient Faith: the Story of Churches of Christ in America* (Conclusion: Renewal and Reform). Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1996.

Hurlbut, Jesse Lyman, *The Story of the Christian Church*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970.

Hutson, Christopher., & Smith, Chad, eds. "Men, Women and Biblical Equality". Retrieved from Gender Justice and Churches of Christ: www.gal328.org.

Hutson, Christopher. "A Study Guide to 1 Timothy 2:8-15". Retrieved from Gender Justice and Churches of Christ: www.gal328.org, 2003.

Kassian, Mary. *The Feminist Gospel: The Movement to Unite Feminism with the Church*. Wheaton: Crossway, 1992.

Kassian, Mary. *The Feminist Mistake: The Radical Impact of Feminism on Church and Culture*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2005.

Kassian, Mary. *Women, Creation, and the Fall*. Wheaton: Crossway, 1990.

Ortberg, John. *What the Bible Says About Men and Women (Sermon Series)*. South Barrington, Illinois: Willow Creek Community Church, 1999.

Osburn, Carroll D., ed. *Essays on Women in Earliest Christianity*. Two volumes. Joplin: College Press, 1993, 1995.

Osburn, Carroll D. *Women in the Church: Reclaiming the Ideal*. Abilene, Texas: ACU Press, 2001.

Osburn, Carroll D. *Women in the Earliest Church. Pepperdine University Bible Lectures*. Malibu: Pepperdine University.

Pauls, Dale. "Seven Questions on Faith and Gender and Church", "Sons and Daughter: Hearing Women's Voices", and "Neither Male Nor Female". Retrieved from www.stamfordchurch.org/writings.

Richards, Lawrence O. & Hoeldtke, Clyde. *A Theology of Church Leadership*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980.

Robinson, Tom. *A Community Without Barriers (Sermon)*. Manhattan, NY Church of Christ 1999 (revised 2001). Retrieved from www.gal328.org.

Shrable, Kenneth. *Roles of Men and Women in Contemporary Culture and Church: Models of Change Compatible with Scripture. Pepperdine University Bible Lectures*. Malibu: Pepperdine University, 1996.

Sumner, Sarah. *Men and Women in the Church*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

Webb, William J. *Slaves, Women & Homosexuals (Introduction: Welcome to the World of Application)*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2001.