



LIVING WATER FELLOWSHIP

APPENDIX A: LIVING WATER FELLOWSHIP WOMEN IN MINISTRY STATEMENT

The issue of whether or not to allow women to work freely in all capacities of ministry has sometimes been divisive in parts of the Christian Church. Serious interpreters of Scripture with exemplary intent have defended conflicting positions. It is our judgment that this issue, though extremely important, falls into the category of doctrines that are not to be considered "essential" in terms of determining a basis for fellowship. In other words, we recognize that some churches will hold different views and we will respect them and gladly work with them for the purposes of advancing God's Kingdom.

Living Water Fellowship allows full freedom for women to minister in our church in terms of both function and office. We affirm and celebrate the New Testament teaching on male headship (Eph. 5:22-32) as a recognition that God often gives men a gift to lead, but we do not see this as precluding gifted women from taking leadership roles.

The New Testament balances its teaching on headship and its culturally related restrictions upon women in ministry (1 Cor. 11:3-16; 14:33-35; 1 Tim. 2:11-15) in the following ways:

- by the startling example of Jesus' treatment of women (see John 4 as an example),
- by calling for a mutuality of submission in all relationships (Eph. 5:21), even in matters related to sexuality and divorce (see 1 Cor. 7:15; 10-14),
- by listing significant female leaders in the early church (see Acts 18:24-28, 21:9,10; Rom. 16:13, 7; Phil, 4:23), and
- by giving a theological basis for the elimination of gender distinction in Christ and in the advancing Kingdom of God (Acts 2:17-21 and Gal. 3:28).

The ministry of women in the Old Testament as prophetesses and national leaders also support the overall teaching of the New Testament on women's breadth of ministry opportunities.

Our normal desire is for married couples to serve together in ministry, enhancing and complementing each other's gifts. However, if God prepares any man or woman for a leadership role, single or married, and if this person is recognized by our church as having an appropriate level of character, gifting, knowledge and experience, we will rejoice to affirm his or her calling into ministry. This is in line with the New Testament principle that the recognition of God's gifting is the final criterion for release into ministry. By recognizing that the New Testament mentions significant female leaders, and by attesting to the giftedness of women today, we are compelled to this conclusion.

Because of these scriptural conclusions we will also extend to women, when it is appropriate, the legal right of licensure and the church confirmation of ordination into ministry.

We also believe that women may serve and should serve when the qualifications are met in any office of the church, including Lead Pastor and elder.

Living Water Fellowship Elder Board

SCRIPTURE & COMMENTARY ON WOMEN IN MINISTRY

CORINTH

Paul's letter to the church in Corinth is in response as a minimum to information received from Chloe about discord in the church and to several questions he had received from the church. Corinth, similar to Ephesus, was a major trade center as well as a center of pagan worship, in particular to Aphrodite, the goddess of love, with its' female priestess (temple prostitutes), pagan meals and sacrifices to idols. This was an infant church located in a most immoral culture. There were some Jews in the church, but mostly it was made up of Gentiles who were former pagans within a culture that promoted selfishness and indulgence in every kind of desire, acted as their gods, and was known for its wealth and immorality. There existed little understanding of the Christian concept of family or moral behavior.

Paul addresses several issues to include: disunity and divisions being caused by disputes/ misunderstandings. Foremost were misunderstandings about the Holy Spirit, incest and immorality, going to the pagan court with lawsuits, fornication, their physical bodies no longer to be used for ungodly purposes, **Christian marriage and how it was to function**, conduct and good order in worship, abuse of the Lord's supper, the abuse of spiritual gifts, wrong teaching about resurrection from the dead, and taking collections for the poor.

1 Cor. 7 -- Paul begins Chapter 7 with "Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a women." Notice that Paul first states the Church's statement, but then goes on to correct their incorrect understanding (which was one of several heresies being promoted within certain cults) with an explanation of the mutually giving of one another's body to the other in the marriage relationship. Paul continues in the following Chapters to address specific issues occurring or being questioned within the Corinthian church.

1 Cor. 11:1-16 Paul speaks about the Corinthian church keeping the traditions he delivered to them, and proceeds to speak about the "head" of every man is Christ, the "head" of every woman is man, and the "head" of Christ is God.

The word "head" is NOT the word "archion" which means "leader, boss"

It is the word "kephale" meaning "source of life, origin, etc" like the "head" of a river

Paul discusses this honoring of headship in the church as a counter to the Corinthian culture and uses head coverings to make His point and goes so far as to say woman should have a sign of authority on her head, **BUT** he then also goes on to say that "In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman, for everything comes from God. For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through women: but all things are from God." Paul's statements again were aimed at countering and strongly opposing the pagan practices within Corinth that were attempting to infiltrate the church.

In 1 Cor 12 -- Paul goes on to talk about each one of us being a part of the body of Christ all being the same in Christ and how the Lord has ordered the members of the body as He determines to include apostles, prophets, teachers, and other gifts. He makes no point anywhere that these are to be only men or any statement as to excluding women in any way. The same is true in Chapter 13 through Chapter 15 verse 33 summarily states "For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.

BUT -- then Paul writes in 1 Cor 14:34-35 the following: ‘Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; for they are to be submissive, as the law also says. And if they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home; for it is shameful for women to speak in the church.’

Again, the question to ask is, “WHAT is Paul countering by addressing this specific subject and WHY does he give the specific reasoning that he gives?” The words in verses 34 and 35 are strong words and pose some difficulty in understanding. In verse 35 the words in most translations have been toned down from what they actually read “...the voice of a women is obscene”. The statement “They are not allowed to speak, but must be submissive, as the Law says” is also problematic because there is no law in the Old Testament that forbids women to speak. **The statement of “going home and asking their husbands if they have questions” is one that stands in contradiction to the practices of both Jesus and Paul who both taught and disciplined women.**

A unique characteristic of verses 34 and 35 is that there is in the Greek a symbol - a grave accent - that appears at the end of verse 35 and denotes the material preceding comes as it is taken from another source. The Greek language does not have quotation marks, but instead used this symbol as we would use quotation marks, (i.e. As in previous chapters, Paul is addressing concerns received from the Corinthian church and the Greek symbols indicate Paul is quoting what he was asked by the church in their statement to him.) If Paul is countering this quote, as he does other statements in previous Chapters, then **vs 36-38** are his counter to the statements of verses 34-35, and 39-40 are his summary. Verses 35-38 read, “Did the word of God originate from you, or did it come to you only? If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritual, he should recognize that what I write to you is the Lord’s command. But if anyone ignores this, he will be ignored.”

A minor point in regard to translation: Some translations such as the King James and the NIV take the phrase “as in all the churches of the saints” and label it as verse 33b, but included it as part of the next sentence (v34). **Other creditable translations such as the NAS and NKJ have it entirely in verse 33 and it is not part of the next sentence or verse (v34).**

EPHESUS

Ephesus during this time was a seat of paganism, overrun with heresy and false doctrine coming from the various cults. The Gnostics twisted biblical truth, teaching that Eve was created before Adam and that she actually liberated the world by listening to the serpent. The cult of Diana flourished in Ephesus and was dominated by female priests and castrated male priests whose practices were counter to both Old and New Testament roles of men and women. The cult of Diana and other paganism such as the Gnostics created many heresies and false doctrines which the early church had to address.

1 Timothy 2:11-14, 15: ... “Let a woman learn in silence with all submissiveness. *I permit no woman to teach or have authority over men; she is to keep silent.* For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor. But women will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love, and holiness with propriety.”

So a logical question is to ask, “WHAT is Paul countering by addressing this specific subject and WHY does he give the specific reasoning that he gives?”

First -- Paul states the overall purpose of his letter is to command certain men not to teach false doctrine, to counter those who had wandered from the faith, and to come against self-promoting teachers who were teaching false doctrine.

Second – the word “authority” is the word “authentein” and it is the ONLY USE OF THIS WORD IN THE ENTIRE BIBLE: “Authentein” means “to murder, ritually castrate, or have dominion over.”

Third – If Paul’s statements in these verses are taken as applying to the entire church and all women, they cannot be reconciled with Paul’s own recognition of and statements about women leaders found in his other letters, or to how Jesus himself interacted with women, and to **other primary doctrinal statements made by Paul related to salvation, equality, and ministry to the Lord that are clearly not gender limited.** Of note is the fact that that many of the churches and denominations who hold to strict universal application interpretation of the first four verses do not hold to the fifth verse in Paul’s statement.

Ephesians 5:21-33, “submitting to one another in the fear of God. Wives submit to your own husband, as to the Lord. For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let wives be to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, and that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies: he who loves his wife love himself.”

21; **Submitting yourselves to one another in fear of the Lord.**

22: Wives, to your own husbands, as to the Lord.

23: the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is to the church

24-26 ARE A Radical approach to women – not property, not multiple wives, not slaves

Paul is addressing a culture issue where the father was the head of family and could exert influence on the marriage. But he counters this cultural practice in verse 31: which is a reference to Gen 2:24 where husband leaves his father and mother and is joined as one flesh to wife.

Titus 1:5-2:10 male elders and female elders - words used are : presbytras/prebytera/ presbytidias which is translated everywhere else as “elders”

The word “deacon” is problematic as this role is understood very differently by different denominations. Whenever the Apostle Paul used the term diakonos he always used it in reference to a minister of the Gospel, (and not to a steward.) Paul referred to several New Testament people, including himself, as diakonoi (ministers): Paul (Rom 15:25; 1 Cor 3:5; Eph 3:7; Col 1:23, Phi 1:1), Epaphras (Col 1:7), Tychicus (Eph 6:21-22; Col 4:7-9), Phoebe (Rom 16:1-2), Apollos (1 Cor 3:5) and even Jesus Christ (Mk 10:42-45; Rom)

1 Tim 3:11 “Wives, too, must be worthy of respect, not slanderers, self-controlled, faithful in everything.” The word “ is actually “women” in Greek.

Of great importance is Jesus attitude and teaching towards women. The gospel elevated women.

Jesus healed and treated men and women the same throughout his ministry without any mention by Him of any distinction.

Matt 12:50 For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother.

Mark 10:15 anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.

ALSO, PAUL MAKES A FOUNDATIONAL STATEMENT IN GALATIANS 3:26-29 neither male nor female, but all are the same in Christ and heirs of the promise

Acts 1 the church met together for prayer in the upper room to include the women and Mary, the mother of Jesus. The group numbered about a hundred and twenty.

Acts 2:4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in tongues as the Spirit enabled them. 3,000 added. Every day they met together in the temple courts and the Lord added to their number. Acts 5 More and more men and women believed

References to women in ministry in New Testament:

Acts 9:36 In Joppa was a disciple named Tabitha (Dorcas)

Acts 15:29 apostles and elders with the whole church agreed to not burden Gentiles with anything beyond eating food sacrificed to idols, from blood, strangled animals and sexual immorality

Acts 16:14 Lydia among the women Paul and Silas baptized, and one of the first Gentile believers

Acts 18:26 Priscilla and Aquila traveled with Paul to Ephesus and explained to Apollos the way of God more adequately

Romans 16:1 I commend to you Phoebe, a deaconess of the church at Cenchrea...the words used are "diakonos" which means minister or deacon and "prostatis" which means "presiding officer"

and Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus – risked their lives for Paul/churches and the church that meets at their house.

Mary who worked very hard for you

:7 Andronicus and Junia who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles and in Christ before Paul

Trypena and Tryphosa, women who work hard in the Lord. And Persis

Col 4:15 Nympha and the church in her house

References to Women in Positions of Authority in Old Testament

Daughters of Zelophehad - Num 27 went before Moses to petition for their inheritance normally given only to sons and the Lord tells Moses that what they ask for is good.

Miriam - Exodus 15 was a prophetess, led the women in song and dance before all of Israel
- Micah 6:4 God speaking to Israel says I brought you out, redeemed you, and sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam (the Lord himself recognizing her position of authority).

Deborah – Judges 4 a prophetess, judged Israel...she sat and the Israelites came up to her for judgement.

Samuel is the only other among the judges accorded the same dual recognition of being both Judge of Israel and prophet. She called Barak and gave him direction and he obeyed her and all the leaders of Israel and the people followed and God gave the victory

Judges 5 -- and Deborah and Barak sang (before the people) their song of praise and victory and Lord gave them 40 years of peace under her leadership.

Huldah – 2 Kings 22 – King Josiah sent the high priest and other officials to go and inquire of the Lord for himself and the people. They went to Huldah, who dwelt in the part of the city that was the college or school (where she taught according to oral tradition). She not only addresses the priest and officials but speaks the word of the Lord to “the man who sent you” meaning the king. She was recognized as having the authority to determine what was the genuine Law and one who could speak with authority that commanded obedience by the King and the leaders of Israel. She is the first person to declare certain writings to be Holy Scripture.

God’s use of Women in the early church and more recently in the 1800s and 1900s

Christian History Magazine published by Christianity Today took a look at Women in the Early Church. What they found was that it wasn’t until the 3rd century AD that women in leadership or otherwise became an issue in the church(,) and the church leadership began to severely restrict their church activities and placed limitations upon women similar to that found in the Roman cultures. Likewise, the doctrinal conclusions of the verses in discussion are actually quite varied and have been applied differently among the different church denominations. We also have the history of great Christian women leaders in modern times such as Fannie Crosby, and many, many others.